

Assassins



at Large

HUGO DEWAR

ASSASSINS AT LARGE

by

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WHAT does it matter if in this or any other land a White Russian general, an exiled Russian economist, an anarchist professor, a former GPU agent or a Communist desirous of breaking from the net are assassinated, abducted or railroaded in a frame-up trial? The Soviet Union presents the world with a challenge, not only military, political and economic, but also moral. A whole series of political killings, and of kidnappings in which the victims are never traced, is recorded in this book for the first time. In each case the victim was an actual or potential opponent of Stalin. These people incurred his hostility because he considered that they represented a challenge to his power.

The antecedents of all the victims establish the motive and reveal the red thread uniting all the crimes. In some cases the hallmark of the GPU is clearly visible; in others the evidence is circumstantial; but a common purpose links them all. No single case would constitute proof of an organised and systematic plan of political assassination carried out by international agents directed from one centre. Even the murder of Leon Trotsky, considered in isolation, might be explained as the more or less independently executed act of an individual materially and morally supported by a section of the Communist Party, but not necessarily involving the GPU. But the cases are too numerous, too widespread, the resources and expenditure required too great, the common political motivation too strong for them not to have been part of an organised whole.

Documented at every point, and often written with first-hand knowledge, ASSASSINS AT LARGE is a terrifying and provocative revelation of how the long arm of the GPU can strike even beyond the Iron Curtain.

ASSASSINS AT LARGE

*Being a fully documented and hitherto unpublished
account of the executions outside Russia ordered by
the GPU*

By
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INTRODUCTION

Towards the end of the eleventh century there arose in the Near East a peculiar politico-religious order, founded by one Hasan-ben-Sabah, a follower of the Prophet Mahomet, and having its headquarters in Syria, among the mountains of Lebanon, where the ruins of its strongholds may be seen to this day. Hasan-ben-Sabah and his fanatical disciples will be remembered for all time, not perhaps so much for the bloody deeds they committed as for the fact that they gave to language a new word—the terrible word assassin. Before the time of Hasan-ben-Sabah no ruler had openly proclaimed the murder of his opponents to be the keystone of his political method, no ruler had so deliberately and systematically sought to make use of this method to maintain and extend his power. From Hasan-ben-Sabah onwards the leaders of this order wielded over their followers an authority so absolute that their commands were tantamount to commands from Mahomet himself. The leader alone possessed a will, to which all others were not merely subordinate—they simply did not exist. For more than a century and a half the terror-inspiring reputation of the 'Old Man of the Mountains' was known throughout the Moslem and Christian world. It was a fanatical instrument of this Shayk-a'l-Jabal who murdered the Marquis of Monteferrat in 1192, Lewis of Bavaria in 1213, and the Khan of Tartary in 1254. Not until Hulagi the Tartar destroyed their Persian strongholds around 1256 did their power begin to wane, to be finally extinguished in Syria about 1272.

The word 'assassin' is derived from Hashshashin, signifying 'the eaters of hashish', for those sent out on their

dreadful missions were said to be drugged beforehand with this weed. But the reputation of the 'Old Man of the Mountains' rests upon more than the skilful use of hashish in moulding the human tools used to remove all those who threatened his rule. For the drug itself was merely one element of a process of mental conditioning remarkable for the psychological knowledge it displayed in those who employed it. This process is described in some detail by Marco Polo in his *Travels* and is worth quoting at length:

In a beautiful valley enclosed between two lofty mountains, he had formed a luxurious garden, stored with every delicious fruit and fragrant shrub that could be procured. Palaces of various sizes and forms were erected in different parts of the grounds, ornamented with works in gold, with paintings, and with furniture of rich silks. By means of small conduits contrived in these buildings streams of wine, milk, honey, and some of pure water, were seen to flow in every direction. The inhabitants of these palaces were elegant and beautiful damsels, accomplished in the arts of singing, playing upon all sorts of musical instruments, dancing, and especially those of dalliance and amorous allurement. . . . The object which the chief had in view in forming a garden of this fascinating kind, was this: that Mahomet having promised to those who should obey his will the enjoyment of Paradise, where every species of sensual gratification should be found, in the society of beautiful nymphs, he was desirous of its being understood by his followers that he also was a prophet and the compeer of Mahomet, and had the power of admitting to Paradise such as he should choose to favour. . . . At his court, likewise, this chief entertained a number of youths, from the age of twelve to twenty years, selected from the inhabitants of the surrounding mountains, who showed a disposition for martial exercises, and appeared to possess the quality of daring courage. To them he was in the daily practice of discoursing on the subject of Paradise announced by the prophet, and of his own power of granting admission; at certain times he caused opium to be administered to ten or a dozen of the youths; and when half-dead with sleep he had them conveyed to the several apartments of the palaces in the garden. Upon awakening . . . each perceived himself surrounded by lovely

damsels, singing, playing, and attracting his regards by the most fascinating caresses, serving him delicate viands and exquisite wines; until . . . he believed himself assuredly in Paradise, and felt an unwillingness to relinquish its delights. (*Travels of Marco Polo*, Everyman ed., pp. 74-5).

The representative on earth of the Prophet Mahomet would promise the chosen that 'he who defends his lord shall inherit Paradise'. 'The consequence of this system was that when any of the neighbouring princes, or others, gave umbrage to this chief, they were put to death by these disciplined disciples', relates Marco Polo.

The drug itself was therefore one element of a diabolically ingenious method of fashioning obedient and ruthlessly efficient instruments of murder, men who breathed and spoke, who had desires and appetites, men who looked like men, but who were in fact mere puppets animated by a will not theirs.

But all this belongs to a remote age. What has it to do with our world?

In March of 1938 a letter was received by the Secretary of the Juridical Section of the Secretariat of the League of Nations denouncing the existence of a 'centralized Mafia of terrorists working on the territory of several states, other than their own'. The writer of this letter went on to say that he could, with the 'help of documents, testimony of witnesses and irrefutable political considerations', prove who was at the head of this band of assassins. No action was taken on this letter. A little over two years later its author himself was assassinated.

In the following pages the evidence in proof of this charge is set forth for the first time in full detail.

The assassins of the 'Old Man of the Mountains' have their modern counterpart in an organization whose members are subjected to an equally effective, if somewhat

different, process of mental conditioning; whose members are equally followers of a Faith owing blind allegiance to a Prophet on earth; but whose operations are on a larger scale, whose power and influence are vastly greater, whose effect upon the civilized world is infinitely more evil.

CHAPTER I

THE CASE OF THE MISSING GENERAL

Shortly after twelve o'clock on the morning of September 22, 1937, General Eugene Miller, President of the White Russian Federation of ex-Combatants, left the office of his organization, situated in the Rue du Colisée, Paris, in order to keep a secret appointment. For a long time he had been plagued by doubts. . . . He was still not altogether easy in his mind about meeting these men. Not because he did not know exactly who they were; not because of the secrecy—he was used to that; nor because he was meeting them on a street corner instead of in a club, a restaurant, some other place more usually assigned for business discussions. This was not going to be precisely a business discussion. The two men with whom he had the rendezvous were, he had been given to understand, emissaries of a foreign power; the nature of their forthcoming discussion was delicate—and dangerous; it was natural that they should prefer a somewhat secluded spot at which to meet. Yet . . . a vague feeling of uneasiness oppressed the General.

His misgivings had been sufficiently strong for him to take an unusual precaution. Before leaving his office he had handed a sealed letter to the secretary of the organization, saying as he did so:

'Don't think I'm out of my mind, giving you this. You are to open it if I don't return.'

General Miller had solid reasons for this action. The organization he headed had powerful enemies. Seven years before, on January 26, 1930, his predecessor in office,

General Koutieпов, had mysteriously vanished without leaving the smallest clue. He had never been heard of again. But for the General the disappearance of Koutieпов was no mystery at all—those powerful enemies were also completely unscrupulous. They would stop at nothing to gain their ends. They had eliminated Koutieпов and they would also eliminate him at the first favourable opportunity. And the man who had arranged the appointment he was now on his way to had once been under a cloud, a cloud that in the minds of some had not been entirely dissipated. Nothing one could put a finger on, nothing concrete . . . but . . . it was just barely possible that he might be an agent of the enemy.

General Miller's premonition of disaster was fully justified. He never returned from that rendezvous. He vanished as though dropped into a bottomless well.

His disappearance, unlike Koutieпов's, was not without a clue. This clue lay in the letter he had fortunately left behind: a few lines only, but it proved of vital importance. With its help at least a partial solution of the mystery was achieved, and one of those involved, although by far not the most important, was brought to book.

At the time of his disappearance the General was a man of seventy. A former Chief of Staff of the 5th Army under the Tsar, then nominally C.-in-C. of the Archangel and Murmansk operations against the Bolsheviks in 1918, he had lived in France as an emigré since 1925, taking an active part in the work of the most violently anti-Bolshevik White Russian emigrés, and after Koutieпов's disappearance occupying the post of President of their largest and most influential organization. With Hitler's seizure of power in Germany this organization was torn between two conflicting factions—the one pro-French, the other pro-German. Both wings regarded foreign intervention as the

only means by which the Soviet regime might be overthrown, but one opposed any support for Germany in the event of her attacking Russia, while the other, to which it was rumoured Miller adhered, favoured full support of Germany in such a contingency. After Miller had vanished it was suggested that he had been lukewarm in his attitude and that it was this lack of enthusiasm for the pro-Hitler wing that led to his 'removal'. The general weight of evidence, however, is strongly against this appraisal of his views, which gives every appearance of having been thought up after the event.

When Miller failed to return from the rendezvous the secretary of his organization opened the letter he had left behind. It read:

I have a rendezvous at half-past twelve today at the corner of the Rue Jasmin and Rue Raffet, in Auteuil, close to Bois de Boulogne, with General Skobline, who is arranging a meeting for me with a German officer, M. Strohmman, military attaché with a neighbouring power, and an official of the Embassy, M. Werner. Both speak Russian fluently. Perhaps it is a trap.

Called to a hastily summoned conference of leading members of the Federation of ex-Combatants on the night of September 22, General Skobline, confronted with this letter of his colleague implicating him in the arrangement of the fatal meeting, denied all knowledge of the affair. Taking advantage of a momentary lack of vigilance on the part of the meeting, he slipped from the room—and vanished. General Skobline too disappeared as completely as if the earth had opened and swallowed him up.

There was no need to seek further proof of Skobline's guilt. But who was behind him? Who were the other two men mentioned in the above letter? The German authorities in Paris denied all knowledge of Werner or Strohmman. One would not expect them to do otherwise. But it was

pointed out that 'Strohmamm' in German signifies 'man of straw'. If either of these two men ever existed except in the imagination of Skobline, their real identity was never established.

Suspicious as to Skobline's real role in the Federation of ex-Combatants had already been aroused some two years before when a fellow member of the organization, a Captain Fedossienko, had accused him as an agent of the Soviet Government. A Court of Honour, presided over by General Erdeli, had cleared him of this charge and since that time he had apparently enjoyed the full confidence of the Federation, even being looked upon as Miller's right-hand man. Undoubtedly, Skobline himself imagined that he had been completely freed from all suspicion. The tell-tale letter revealing Miller's doubts about his loyalty must have come as a staggering blow, catching him completely off balance. It was the one flaw in an otherwise perfectly engineered operation. Without the letter the Miller case would have had to be listed, like Koutieпов's, under the category of unsolved. However much suspicion might have pointed in a certain direction, there would have been no tangible proof. In the eyes of his former colleagues, Skobline's flight now set the final seal of proof on the charge, made against him in 1935, that he was an agent of the Soviet Government. The subsequent police investigations appeared to go all the way to a complete confirmation of this.

Skobline, whoever might be behind him, was at any rate the key man. But the police sought him in vain. Evidently caught off guard by the letter, he had visited a friend late on the night of the 22nd, borrowed a small sum of money and left hurriedly. He had not dared to go home. It was clear that he had been unprepared for flight. But it was equally clear that he had resourceful allies who recognized the vital

importance of his not falling into the hands of the police, for that was the last ever seen of him. Alone, with a few hundred francs in his possession, unable to go to his bank to draw more money, how far could he have got, how long could he have remained hidden without the assistance of such allies? The whole of the French police force was mobilized for the man-hunt, but they found not the slightest further trace of him. Obviously there was a powerful organization at work. Only this organization knows precisely what happened to Koutieпов and Miller; only it knows how Skobline made his escape. But one thing is sure—the world will never see any of them alive again.

In the circumstances it was inevitable that not only the anti-Soviet members of the White Russian emigration but also a large section of French public opinion should believe that here was evidence of something involving the secret agents of the Soviet Government. But it is one thing to have suspicions, even to be absolutely sure in one's mind; it is another thing to have concrete, unassailable proof. A similar charge had been made in 1930 when Koutieпов had vanished, but no definite evidence had been unearthed. All that was known for certain was that the missing General had been seen to enter the limousine at the invitation of two men, that the limousine had driven off, followed by a taxi in which was a uniformed police officer—or rather, as it later transpired, someone masquerading as such.

Nothing further to the affair turned up until 1935, when a French convict named Le Gall alleged that he had been paid by Soviet agents to take a car to the main north road outside Paris to meet a taxi containing two men and a woman. According to his statement, Koutieпов had been taken from this taxi and placed in the car, which had then been driven to the small seaside resort of Malo-les-Bains,

near Dunkirk, where the General had been carried into a villa. Such 'evidence', however, was of no real value, although useful as propaganda material for certain elements hostile to the Soviet Government. It was argued, and the argument was not implausible, that no other body could possibly have both a sufficient interest in getting rid of Koutieпов and the necessary resources to accomplish his removal. But in the case of Koutieпов neither direct nor indirect responsibility of the Soviet Government could be established at that time: one could believe it or not, according to one's political convictions.

But with the disappearance of Miller this charge against the Soviet Government was again made—and this time it seemed a little less wild, a little less improbable than before. Commenting on the affair, the *Manchester Guardian* of September 25 expressed what was perhaps the most general reaction to it in this country. The paper argued:

While it would be reckless to suggest that Miller was the victim of the Right-wing extremists, it seems almost equally improbable that the Soviet could have any interest in kidnapping him.

Thus it was improbable that the Right-wing extremists were involved but only 'almost' as improbable that the Russian Government was involved. There was in fact little if anything to connect the affair with Right-wing extremists, although, as will be shown, an attempt was made to lay a trail in this direction. On the other hand, there was some evidence that appeared to implicate the Soviet authorities. And if neither was responsible, then this was indeed a mystery beyond hope of solution—for what others could possibly have any interest in kidnapping General Miller?

In spite, therefore, of all the seeming improbability of the involvement of the Soviet Government in the affair, the French police were compelled to recognize that

what little evidence there was pointed in a very definite direction.

On the evening of the day of Miller's disappearance the Soviet freighter *Mariya Ulyanova* was reported to have left Le Havre before her scheduled time and without having fully completed the normal harbour formalities. This unusual haste was, in the circumstances, suspicious. Even more suspicious was the fact that shortly before its departure a van belonging to, or hired by, the Soviet Embassy in Paris had been observed on the quayside, and customs officials had noted that a large trunk had been taken from this van and carried aboard the Soviet vessel. Evidence as to the time of arrival of this van was conflicting, and the question of time was of considerable importance, since upon this depended the possibility or otherwise of the van having been used to transport Miller's body from Paris, a distance of roughly one hundred and forty kilometres. Inspector Piguet stated that the van had arrived between three and three-fifteen and that in his opinion it was impossible to do the journey from Paris to Le Havre in under four hours. Miller could not have been kidnapped until some time after twelve o'clock, the time of his appointment, and therefore the van could not have been used for the purpose suggested. A M. Colin, however, who had been in the captain's cabin aboard the *Mariya Ulyanova* for the purpose of signing some papers connected with a shipment of goods, testified that while he was there a man had entered without knocking and spoken a few rapid words in Russian to the captain, who thereupon had left hurriedly. M. Colin's business having been already completed, he made his way ashore, noticing as he did so the van in question standing on the quay. The time then, he said, was somewhere between three-forty and four-fifteen.

A M. Paulin, also present at the time, informed the

special police commissioner in Le Havre, M. Chavineau, that the van could have arrived at any time between three-thirty and four-thirty. The customs officials said that the van gave the appearance of having travelled fast and far.

Whatever the exact time of arrival of the van may have been, the circumstances were at first regarded as sufficiently suspicious for the French Government to contemplate sending a destroyer in pursuit of the Soviet vessel. Matters went so far as an interview between the Soviet Ambassador and a representative of the French Government, during which the Ambassador was informed that in view of the widespread feeling the case had aroused it would be wise to contact Moscow and have the ship return in order to clear it of all suspicion. But an hour after this interview the Socialist Minister of the Interior, M. Marx Dormoy, advised the leader of the Government that the trail was a false one, the van having arrived too early to have any connection with the affair. If any such drastic action as the despatch of a destroyer had in fact been contemplated, this report of Dormoy's finally decided against it.

Two further points which, rightly or wrongly, added to the general feeling that all was not strictly above board with regard to the *Mariya Ulyanova*, must also be mentioned. First, in returning to Leningrad the ship did not pursue her normal course, which would have taken her through the Kiel Canal, but went instead by way of the Danish coast. The authorities in Leningrad explained her precipitate departure as due to the urgent need for her to proceed to London immediately after discharging her cargo in Leningrad in order to pick up passengers waiting there. Secondly, M. Chavineau alleged that although at first complimented on his prompt action in reporting all the circumstances surrounding the unusually hasty departure of the

Soviet ship, he had subsequently been informed that 'at the moment we are on very good terms with the Soviets and your report threatens to disturb these relations'. Furthermore, he complained that following upon this he had been transferred to lower-grade duties at the Gare St. Lazare. In the course of the legal proceedings subsequently taken against the only person arrested in connection with the case, the prosecution suggested at one point that M. Chavineau had been penalized for carrying out his duties conscientiously. Maître Maurice Ribet thought that it might not have been entirely outside the realm of probability that the commissioner of police sent from Paris to check up had been instructed not to attach particular importance to alleged facts tending to implicate the Soviet vessel; and that, therefore, there had been a tendency to minimize such evidence as might appear to lead in this direction. The suggestion was, not unnaturally, denied by the authorities concerned. According to M. Ducloux, Controller-General of the Sureté Nationale, Chavineau had been demoted because of faults committed subsequent to the institution of the investigation, and his demotion had nothing at all to do with the investigation. Chavineau, he said, had gone on leave without first obtaining the official permission of his superior. Against this, Chavineau pointed out that his vacation had been perfectly in order. It seemed obvious that he was genuinely convinced he had been victimized. Cited to appear before the Court, M. Marx Dormoy excused himself on the grounds of parliamentary immunity. All this left a bad taste in the mouth of the public; there was a widespread suspicion—however unfounded, it was in the circumstances quite understandable—that a solution of the Miller case was being hampered by considerations of high politics.

On October 25 the wife of General Skobline, better

known as Nadine Plevitskaya, the popular cabaret singer of Russian folk-songs, was arrested and charged with being an accomplice in the kidnapping of General Miller.

On the morning following the disappearance of Miller and the flight of her husband, Plevitskaya had been seen to leave her hotel apartment in a markedly distressed state. In response to solicitous enquiries, she had said that she was going to visit her doctor. The police had been unable to find her for questioning until the following day, when the explanation she gave of her movements, and those of her husband, on the fatal day was in contradiction to the testimony of other witnesses. Documents seized at the Skobline's apartment in Paris and at their villa in the country established beyond doubt that the General was a secret agent of a foreign power. The fact that this material had not been destroyed confirms that Skobline had been caught unprepared. According to *The Times* of October 22, this material threw 'some light on his activities . . . it is alleged that he compiled dossiers of all Russian organizations in France, whether Tsarist, Republican or Soviet; that he was head of a well-equipped espionage system, the so-called "Interior Line" founded by Koutieпов in Sofia in 1927.' Two of the alleged agents were foreigners wanted in connection with the Reiss affair (the Reiss affair is dealt with in the next chapters). The documents seized were also said to throw light on the murder in Paris, earlier that year, of the Russian economist Navachine, and on the suicide of Kreuger, the Swedish financier-industrialist. (The Navachine case is discussed in Chapter IV).

Exactly how much did Madame Skobline, alias Plevitskaya, know of the activities of her husband? The prosecution sought to prove that not only did she know all about them, but that she was in fact the dominant personality in their partnership. A damning piece of evidence against her

was the fact that she had, whilst in jail, asked for a bible to be sent from her home: a particular bible with a green cloth cover. This bible proved to contain the key for decoding the secret correspondence of her husband. She denied any knowledge of this code and insisted that she knew nothing of the activities of her husband as an under-cover agent. Confronted with Madame Miller, with whom she had always maintained relations of the most friendly nature, and being begged by her to reveal all she knew, she continued to deny any secret knowledge whatever of the circumstances of Miller's disappearance. But she did say that she imagined that both of the vanished men were in Russia by that time. Perhaps by this she meant to console Madame Miller with the belief that her husband was still alive. But it was a strange remark for her to make in the circumstances. Indeed, it was reported that she was naïve enough to suggest that she be allowed to go to Russia herself, where she felt sure that she would be able to find the missing men.

On December 14, 1938, Nadine Plevitskaya was sentenced to twenty years' hard labour, a sentence generally regarded as a particularly severe one for a French court to pass on a woman. Its harshness indicates the intensity of public feeling aroused by the case. There seems little doubt that she knew about her husband's activities; but was she actually initiated into the plot for Miller's abduction? Perhaps she kept silent for the sake of her husband? He, unquestionably, was the chief culprit. The part he played excites so little sympathy that few will shed tears at the thought that he in all probability eventually suffered the same fate as his victim. But behind him there were many others; there was a powerful organization whose leading strings went back to—where?

Madame Skobline, otherwise Nadine Plevitskaya, died in

| Rennes prison in October, 1944, taking her secrets with her to the grave.

| On February 22, 1938, the body of a man was fished out of the Seine near Sevres. He had been strangled and then thrown into the river, and from marks on his body it was evident that he had put up a desperate resistance before succumbing. According to the press at the time, documents found on him tended to show that he was in possession of precise information concerning the circumstances of Miller's disappearance. But if this was indeed so, and not simply a piece of journalistic imagining, nothing developed from it. This man, Colonel Chimerin by name, was also a White Russian emigré. He had been earning a living, in common with quite a number of his exiled compatriots, as a taxi-driver. He had left his home in Levallois, Perret, on January 20 and, not returning, had been reported missing. One of the letters found on him was stated to have referred to arrangements for a meeting of White Russian officers formerly belonging to Denikin's Army. One does not know if this statement was inspired as a counter to the statement that he knew something about the Miller case, the implication behind which was that he had been a Soviet agent who knew too much and was not to be trusted to keep his mouth shut. The letter, if it ever existed, and if it was legible after immersion in the river, would suggest, on the other hand, that he was in league with strongly anti-Soviet elements. One must bear in mind that a sharp propaganda campaign was then being waged by the Communists and their fellow-travellers against the White Russian emigration; the political atmosphere was thick with accusation and counter-accusation. According to Communist Party propaganda the political crimes of violence against individuals arose from internecine warfare

in the ranks of the White Russian émigrés in which the Gestapo was also involved. People like Miller, Skobline and Chimerin were referred to by Molotov in the following terms:

Up to the present, notwithstanding the existence of friendly relations between the Soviet Union and the French Republic, the territory of France offers a refuge for all sorts of adventurers and criminal organizations which are nothing but nests of vipers, nests of terrorists and diversionists, which openly pursue their hostile and anti-Soviet activities under the eyes and under the protection of the French authorities. These facts cannot be justified by the right of asylum for foreigners. It may well be asked who finds it necessary to encourage all sorts of criminals of Russian or non-Russian bourgeois origin, who engage in terrorist and anti-Soviet activity on French territory and openly perpetrate their crimes against Soviet representatives and organizations. Why are these persons protected in France, and how does this accord with the Franco-Soviet pact of friendship? Our People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs will certainly have to concern itself with this question. (*The Foreign Policy of Soviet Russia*, Max Beloff, R.I.I.A., 1949; Vol. II, pp. 113-4.)

Thus, according to Molotov, the enemies of the Soviet were the only people to engage in terrorist activities. This line was faithfully followed throughout the world by the loyal supporters of Soviet policy. The Comintern organ *International Press Correspondence* (November 6, 1937, No. 48) carried an article that expressed this policy of throwing the responsibility on to the White Russian organizations and the Gestapo. Under the heading 'Hitler and the Russian White Guards in France' is the accusation that Miller was 'in touch with spies of the German general staff, directing the sending of spies and wreckers to the USSR through the channels of the Gestapo'. The Miller case is characterized, in the jargon of the Communist International, as a 'diversionist' affair. One may well ask, therefore, who was diverting from what? Presumably the Communist argument

was that Miller had been kidnapped in order to put the Soviet Government in a bad light. To do this effectively, the 'diversionists' had chosen as the key man in the plot a person who had already at one time been suspected of being a Soviet agent. The French police, however, claimed that their examination of the material found at the Skoblins' addresses had established the existence of a vast Soviet counter-espionage system. So the 'diversionists', in choosing Skobline for their instrument, had chosen very well indeed. The only mystery is, how they managed to get him to take on the job.

The supporters of Stalin could not deny that Miller was completely hostile to the Soviet Union. It was clear, from the fact that he had accepted a rendezvous with two men represented to him as German agents, that he was in some way connected with German military intelligence. They therefore argued that while Miller was prepared to send spies and wreckers into the Soviet Union, he had balked at certain 'reforms' that his masters, the Gestapo, wanted to introduce into the activities of the Federation of ex-Combatants. The article went on:

The reforms consisted mainly of terrorist and provocative activities directed against the democratic countries, in espionage for Germany on a large scale and—especially for France—in organizing assistance for Franco and preparing the White Guards living in France for participation in the Fascist coup. . . .

Because of his resistance to these 'reforms' Miller became 'inconvenient', and so he was got rid of by his friend and protégé, General Skobline, 'who undertook to lure him to his doom'. The affair is therefore at one and the same time 'diversionist'—it still remains more than unclear who was diverting from what—and a purely internal struggle between completely pro-Hitler agents, such as Skobline was represented to be, and the not-so-completely

pro-Hitler agents like Miller. In an effort to give colour to this line of argument, which certainly needed some colour to give it any semblance of plausibility, *Pravda* published (September 30, 1937) a despatch from its special correspondent in Spain, Michael Koltzov. Koltzov quoted from papers allegedly found on General Anatole Fock, captured on the Quinto (Aragon) front while fighting for Franco, in order to demonstrate that Miller was at loggerheads with other members of his organization over the question of how far they should go in supporting nazi-fascism. According to this despatch, opportunely enough published eight days after the kidnapping, a letter from Miller was found on Fock blaming him for his extremely pro-Hitler attitude. These captured documents, said *Pravda*, proved that the White Guards were linked with Italian and German intervention in Spain and, what was the real purpose of the despatch, that they had an account to settle with Miller.

So, to recapitulate, the argument runs: Miller did not object to espionage, but he did not want it to be 'on a large scale'; he did not object to supporting Hitler and Mussolini, but he did not want this support to go too far. He was therefore removed by the more extreme elements with the assistance of the Gestapo. At the same time his removal was a diversionist affair calculated to arouse public opinion against the Soviet.

In passing, it may be remarked that Michael Koltzov, sender of the above-quoted despatch, was one of the many Soviet representatives in Spain during the Civil War who were suddenly recalled and heard of no more.

The *International Press Correspondence* article goes on to assert that Koutieпов had been eliminated as a result of internecine disagreements of the 'Interior Line' espionage organization; that the killing of Navachine was the work of

the Gestapo; and that the killing of Ignace Reiss in Lausanne was also carried out by the Gestapo. No proof of these assertions is given. It may, of course, be argued that such cases are, by their very nature, usually impossible of solution; that it is normally impossible to obtain concrete evidence against some particular person or persons, and that any evidence must therefore necessarily be of a circumstantial nature. In an effort to fix upon the guilty party the first thing one must look for is a motive. Secondly, one must discover who possessed the means to carry out such operations, since they require more than a little organization and considerable material resources. This was especially true of the abductions of Koutieпов and Miller. Thirdly, one must connect up all this circumstantial evidence into a logical whole.

Approaching the problem in this way, what does one find? Only two organizations could have had a motive for 'liquidating' Miller—this was admitted on all sides. The strenuous efforts of the Stalinists to place the responsibility elsewhere constitute in themselves a tacit admission of the strength of the Soviet motive. But the motive attributed to the Gestapo appears far-fetched, to put it mildly. The Stalinists themselves charged Miller with being a key man in the business of sending spies and wreckers into the Soviet Union. Would not this in itself constitute the strongest possible motive for wanting him out of the way? Certainly a far stronger one than it was possible to show the Gestapo had. It is instructive to recall that in the so-called 'Wreckers' Trial' in Moscow in 1933, the President of the Court, V. V. Ulrich, suddenly asked one of the accused, Monkhouse, who had been with the British forces in Archangel and Murmansk: 'And where was Miller?' Monkhouse replied that although he had been in Archangel he had not seen him. 'When did he leave?'

asked the President. 'I do not know when he left', answered Monkhouse. (*Wrecking Activities at Power Stations in the Soviet Union*, Modern Books Ltd., 1933, pp. 522). That was all. The name of Miller crops up suddenly like that, in passing as it were. It is not mentioned again; but General Miller had obviously not been forgotten by the Soviet authorities; he remained a figure of some interest for them.

So far as resources were concerned it can be said that both the Gestapo and the GPU* disposed of adequate means for enterprises of this nature. But apart from the fact of its having the means, there is not a scrap of other circumstantial evidence that arouses suspicion against the Gestapo. It is worth noting that Skobline, accused by the Stalinists of being a Gestapo agent, had in 1935 been acquitted of the charge of being a GPU agent by a Court of Honour presided over by General Erdeli, and it is this same Erdeli who is referred to in the *International Press Correspondence* article as one of the 'whites who did not like to be spied upon' and who 'succeeded in putting the "Interior Line" out of action in France'. Let us recall that it was Koutieпов who organized the 'Interior Line', Koutieпов who was kidnapped and never seen alive again.

The Soviet Embassy van alongside the *Mariya Ulyanova*; the trunk carried aboard the Soviet vessel; the precipitate departure; the subsequent removal of the too zealous Chavineau from his post and the refusal of Dormoy to testify at the trial of Plevitskaya—all these facts inevitably direct suspicion towards a certain point.

The only piece of 'evidence' appearing to involve the Gestapo comes precisely from the quarter most anxious to

* See Addendum (p. 200) for a brief outline of the development of this organization, and the reason why the initials 'GPU' are used throughout this book, in preference to other initials expressing a change in form but not in content.

turn attention away from the GPU. Compare Koltzov's despatch to *Pravda* with the note sent on January 8, 1932, to Sir Eric Drummond, then Secretary-General of the League of Nations, by Krestinsky, at that time acting Commissar for Foreign Affairs (executed in 1938 as a spy of the German Intelligence, with which he was alleged to have had connections since 1921!) 'Our authorities', said this note, 'have learned reliably that certain Russian emigrés in Paris led by Miller, Dragmilov and Shatilov, were given orders to make an attempt on Litvinov's life. . . .' Several months before, the German Communist paper, *Rote Fabne*, published the following piece of inspired information:

An extraordinary piece of provocation, as planned by Turkul (a White Russian emigré—author), is to be the assassination of Trotsky. . . . In executing his plans the honourable general will utilize the fact, which has already been reported by his agents, that Trotsky is poorly protected by the Turkish authorities.

This alleged projected terrorist activity of General Anto Vasilievich Turkul was also, it was said, to include the elimination of Litvinov and Gorki. These statements are calculated to create a certain atmosphere. In the first place, notice is given of the fact that Trotsky is 'poorly protected'. Linking the names of Litvinov and Gorki with that of Trotsky as the intended victims of the White Guards helps to give the 'warning' an appearance of genuineness. But why should either of the first two require to be warned? And what purpose had the Stalinists in warning their deadliest enemy, Trotsky? There is absolutely no sense in this warning; it has no meaning—except as an alibi established beforehand, belonging to the same category as Koltzov's despatch (although that, perhaps through an unfortunate oversight, was not issued until after Miller's abduction).

All the statements of the Soviet Government and its

supporters in various countries on the subject of terrorist activities are thus seen to have one and the same objective—to create the impression that these activities, or alleged activities, are directed against the Soviet Union and the Soviet Union alone (with the sole and peculiar exception of Trotsky). These statements, however, only succeed in adding weight to the view that it was precisely the Soviet Government itself that had the strongest motive for 'liquidating' the leaders of this anti-Soviet terrorist activity.

Yet even if all the known facts on the Miller case are still felt to be insufficient to establish with absolute and irrefutable authority the guilt of the GPU, a new line of approach to the problem remains to be explored. If it is possible to show that the Koutieпов and Miller cases were not the only ones of this nature, but that a whole series of like crimes have been perpetrated in many countries; if in every case it can be demonstrated that all the victims had, in spite of their varying political view-points, one thing in common, namely, opposition to the Stalin regime and to the world policy carried out by its satellite bodies in every land; and if one can also advance, not simply circumstantial, but direct, concrete evidence linking the foreign section of the GPU with these crimes—then the Miller case appears in a new light. It will be then seen as one of a series of political executions carried out by the GPU in accordance with a calculated plan. It has been said that foreign policy is simply the extension of domestic policy on to the world scene. Likewise it may be suggested that GPU methods abroad would exhibit the same feature as at home.

Before we leave the Miller case as such, a final point in the above-quoted *International Press Correspondence* article must be noted. This point is the claim that the assassination of Ignace Reiss was carried out, like the other crimes,

by the Gestapo. In making such a claim the Stalinists committed a grave error. For if it can be shown that this charge has absolutely no basis in fact, then the doubts regarding the other accusations are considerably strengthened. And if, still further, incontrovertible proof can be advanced that the GPU itself, and not the Gestapo, was responsible for the murder of Reiss . . . then this doubt is transformed into absolute conviction.

CHAPTER II

THE DUPE

Here, in the tragedy of Renata Steiner, we relate the case-history of the perfect dupe. Her story shows how cynically the GPU can make use of those who seek to serve Stalin because they are convinced that his 'Communism' expresses the noblest of human ideals. There are many of these dupes in the world today and although not all of them will make such a mess of their lives as Steiner made of hers, yet they all serve the same ends as she did, and it is precisely because in her case these ends are so clearly exposed, because the stages by which she was led to her destruction are so plainly marked, that it is of outstanding value.

The great majority of those who aid the work of the Communist parties in the world, whether directly as members or indirectly as 'fellow-travellers', never, of course, have any contact at all with the secret forces that control those parties. These people are none the less made use of by the GPU. Renata Steiner's case is admittedly an extreme one; she was the puppet *par excellence*; but the difference between her and other rank-and-file members of the Communist parties is only one of degree. Almost any of Stalin's Western followers might find themselves in her shoes. She was not unintelligent, she was not a weakling, she did not do what she did for gain; her only real crime was that she believed blindly in Stalin as the embodiment of her ideal of human liberty and progress. And the GPU took her faith and made use of it for its own ends.

The myth of the Russian Revolution as the harbinger of a new and more humanitarian way of life dies hard. It is perhaps too much to hope that mere facts will shake the faith in Stalin's regime of those who believe largely because they want to believe. The attempt must nonetheless be made. It may safely be wagered that not one in ten thousand has ever even heard the name of Renata Steiner.

Renata Steiner was born on April 16, 1908, in Saint-Gall, Switzerland. She became a teacher in a school in Zurich and there came into contact with young Communists fired with the vision of a splendid equalitarian society coming into existence in the land of promise, Soviet Russia. In this far from perfect world may be found many good and valid reasons why a young woman should feel drawn towards the 'great Russian experiment', which seemed at last to be realizing the age-old prophecy of the meek casting their meekness aside and inheriting the earth. And did not the city of Zurich itself hold many memories of those obscure impoverished exiles from Tsarist oppression, Lenin and Krupskaya, Zinoviev, Kamenev, and many another of the heroic figures whose lives were calculated to fire the imagination and inspire the emulation of youth. There in that city a handful of unknown men and women had planned and organized, directing the activities of their small groups of harassed and persecuted followers within Tsarist Russia. Until one day they had stepped forth from the shadows to the front of the stage, into the lime-light of world history. It was a magnificent and compelling legend. A few tracts and pamphlets, a few speeches and lectures, a little grubbing into this or that recommended volume, many ardent discussions with Party members hardly more versed than she was in social theory—and the conversion was complete. This is the way it goes with most middle-class people who join the Communist Party, and the way it

probably went with her. Her subsequent career shows that she had a certain drive, determination, ambition; that she was profoundly discontented with the lot that life in her native land offered and that she had the courage to cut adrift, strike out on her own and seek adventure. Let us not be unfair: she must also have been moved by a social conscience. It does not matter if this was simply the rationalization of her own feelings of frustration; it was there; she wanted to play her part in 'remoulding the world nearer to the heart's desire'.

So in 1934 she went to see the land where the foundations of this new world were being laid. She went as a tourist, stayed there for five or six weeks, and was overjoyed at what she saw. In that short time she could, of course, only skim the surface of things, but how wonderfully different everything seemed from the humdrum existence she had so far known! How splendidly remote from the 'Church, Children and Kitchen' of her homeland; what unlimited opportunities a woman could find in the land of socialism! She longed to remain and become part of that life.

Although permission to stay and work in the Soviet Union was refused her, Renata did not give up hope but determined to go on trying until she succeeded. Her mother died and with that the last of her home ties was broken, for she apparently did not get on well with her father. Maybe she thought him provincial, narrow-minded, and 'reactionary'. So she went off to France, hoping to find the necessary contacts to help her achieve her ambition of becoming a Soviet citizen. The Communist Party of Switzerland was tiny and uninfluential, but in France it was a power.

At first she worked as a children's nurse in Nantes. Then she moved to Paris, where she studied French at the Sorbonne and Russian at the Université Ouvrière, living on her savings and money left her by her mother. In another

effort to get to the Soviet Union she wrote to the *Monde*, organ of Henri Barbusse, the world-famous French author who did so much to help spread the cult of Stalinism among intellectuals all over the world. Already at that time it had become more difficult to visit the USSR; the days of mass pilgrimages of the faithful were over. But in August, 1935, she at last received her tickets from Intourist and again entered the land of her dreams. There she renewed her friendship with Madame Krieger, with whom she had formed an acquaintance on her first trip, and through this woman met a man named Dierezdiev, one of the higher functionaries of the railway administration. Dierezdiev wanted to marry her but she rejected him. Apparently he had let slip some remarks critical of the regime, which made her doubt his loyalty. This incident throws light on Renata Steiner's frame of mind; already her enthusiasm had reached the point where the slightest hint that a person might have any views other than those officially laid down was sufficient to make him suspect of dangerous thinking. It appears that Dierezdiev was shortly after 'replaced' in his post and heard of no more. Evidently she had judged him correctly. She dismissed the matter from her mind.

But still Renée could not get permission to live and work in Russia. She was compelled to return to France, where for a time she had a job as assistant in an antique shop in the Rue Bonaparte. The Consulate of the USSR in Paris, in response to ceaseless pleading to be allowed to go back to Russia and take up work there, sent her to the *Union pour le Repatriement des Russes en Russie*, situated at number twelve Rue de Buci, Paris, sixth *arrondissement*. Was it not rather strange to send a Swiss national to an organization ostensibly concerned with the repatriation of Russians? The thought evidently did not cross her mind. She went to the address given her and there made the acquaintance of one

Pierre Schwarzenberg, assistant to Larine, the secretary of the organization. Schwarzenberg suggested that the best way in which she could get to the Soviet Union would be for her to render some service to that country. The suggestion was broached in very general terms and Miss Steiner understood him to mean that she should help with translations and similar literary work. Through Schwarzenberg she met Serge Efron, introduced as a Russian journalist in need of an assistant. From Efron she received the sum of twenty francs a day and expenses in return for her help in his work, the precise nature of which would be explained when he was ready to start.

Through Serge Efron she came into contact with Marcel Rollin, Pierre-Louis Ducomet, François Rossi and others whom she knew only as Michel, André and Leo. All of these people were, naturally, ardent supporters of Soviet Russia. Gradually the nature of the work she would be called upon to do took shape. The burning topic of conversation was the situation in Spain, where the forces of reaction, represented by Franco and backed by German Nazism and Italian Fascism, were locked in mortal combat with the forces of progress, represented by the Republican Government, whose sole true ally was Soviet Russia. What could be done to help the forces of progress? It was not long before Renée was told of a way in which she could play a part in this historic struggle. Agents of General Franco were in France at that very moment, negotiating the purchase of arms and equipment and arranging their transport to Spain. Against these agents a counter-espionage system was being organized. It was a task of paramount importance to track these men down and report their every movement to representatives of the Soviet engaged in the work of aiding Republican Spain. In addition it was thrilling work with a romantic 'Cloak and Dagger' atmosphere;

it gave one a sense of close personal involvement in the mighty drama daily hitting the headlines of the world press. Renée needed no persuading. She saw now how adroitly, with what circumspection and caution she had been gradually introduced into a sphere of activity to which only the most trustworthy could hope to be admitted. She could only admire, take pride in the confidence shown and strive to be worthy of the trust placed in her.

In August, 1936, Renata Steiner was assigned to the job of shadowing a certain Monsieur and Madame Sedov. She was not given any information about these people; she was told that they were two of Franco's agents. She did not ask any questions. That was enough for her to know. For this job she received the sum of two thousand francs. The next task given her was to keep track of a man in Holland, to report on his movements and especially to note if he was ever seen in the company of a certain 'man with glasses', represented as being a dangerous key-agent engaged in the traffic of arms to Franco.

In August, 1937, the search for this 'man with glasses' became particularly feverish. They had succeeded in tracing him to an apartment in the Avenue Mozart, but he had suddenly left and they had lost sight of him again.

One day Renée met Michel by appointment in a café on the Place d'Italie. A Russian of about thirty to thirty-five years of age turned up at this rendezvous and took Renée off to the Café Dupont, where they found Leo. It appeared that there was a strong lead as to the hide-out of the man for whom they were looking. Could she drive a car? Yes, and she also had a Swiss driving licence. Good. She was given 1000 francs and told to be ready for a trip to Switzerland. The next day she met the man known as Leo, together with Rossi, and was told that she was being sent to Berne, where she would await further orders.

Leo =
Rossi
P 25.

On August 28, Leo telephoned to say she was to take the eleven o'clock train. He saw her off at the station, giving her a sealed letter to hand to Rossi, who would be waiting for her at Berne. In due course she met Rossi, gave him the letter and engaged a room at the Hotel City. Leaving their luggage there, they went to the Casino Garage and hired a car, depositing 150 Swiss francs as security. On September 1st Renée was sent back to Paris to take a letter to Leo. They did not trust the post. She returned with a reply next day.

On September 3 she met Rossi at the garage. With him was an attractive woman of middle age with greying hair, introduced as Gertrude Schildbach, another Communist sympathizer devoted to the cause of Loyalist Spain. Via Fribourg, Montreux and Martigny they proceeded as far as Salvan. From Salvan Renée went on alone to Finhaut. Rossi had information that the 'man with glasses' was somewhere in this neighbourhood and it was Renée's job to watch out for him at the Finhaut railway station. hardly

Sure enough, she saw him the next day on the station, awaiting with a woman and child the train to Martigny. Delighted with her success, she phoned Rossi, who was at the Hotel de la Paix, Lausanne. 'Uncle has left'—the pre-arranged code message. Gertrude Schildbach took the message, congratulated her and called Rossi to the phone. He ordered her to come to Lausanne. She did so and was instructed to go to Territet to find out where the wife and child of the 'man at Finhaut' were living.

Alighting from the train at Montreux, Renata Steiner went out of the station, crossed the road and descended the steps to the tramway. Across the lake the trees on the mountainside made a thick, crisped pelt, deep-green and velvety soft. Above the Rhône Valley the Dents du Midi,

free of cloud, gleamed in the September sun. The lake waters, continually changing under the influence of sky and sun and wind, were a priceless jewel in a lovely setting.

There was a sprinkling of tourists in the cafés along the roadside. One could pick them out a mile away, she thought to herself, with a half-pitying, half-contemptuous smile. 'Petit-bourgeois!' That was the word that summed them up. The phrase had all the more force for her, had a spice of more than normal venom, because she herself felt secretly guilty of belonging, at least, of having been born into, that despised class. 'Petit-bourgeois!' It expressed all that was individualistic, self-seeking, self-complacent, narrow-minded, provincial and materialistic (in the Victorian sense, of course, not the philosophic). Perhaps only one trained in Communist jargon can really appreciate the full scornful content of the word. Well, she was certainly a world away from *that* world. . . . Useful for certain particular phases of the class struggle . . . the Popular Front tactic . . . all men and women of goodwill . . . the fight against Fascism. . . . She luxuriated in a feeling of immense superiority.

Miss Steiner searched around Territet without success. She found herself a room for the night and then tried to phone Rossi but could not reach him as he was away from the hotel in Lausanne.

In the morning she tried once more to phone Rossi but he was still absent. All that morning she kept up the search, riding each tram going into Montreux, getting off at the Château de Chillon (grim fortress symbol of the 'Eternal Spirit of the chainless mind') and alighting at the Rochers de Naye station, knowing that sooner or later the woman she sought would board one of the trams. And in the afternoon her patience was rewarded; the companion of the 'Franco agent' got on a tram and took a ticket to Vevey.

She dogged the woman's footsteps all that afternoon, returned with her to Territet and noted the house she entered. Elated with the success of her mission she immediately phoned the Hotel de la Paix in Lausanne. But Rossi had still not returned.

The following morning she arose a little later than usual and after breakfast strolled into Montreux. Sitting in a café on the main street running through the town, she read the latest news of the Spanish Civil War in the *Gazette de Lausanne* and felt how privileged she was to be so close to the secret heart of that epoch-making struggle. She too was a soldier in a way. Scanning the rest of the news she read of the discovery of the bullet-riddled body of a man on the Chamblandes road outside Lausanne. How the papers played these things up! What a to-do was made about something that, after all, seen in relation to the world-shaking events in Spain, was a matter of no real importance. How could one get worked-up about the death of an individual when tens of thousands were fighting and dying in battles that might well be the prelude to a world conflict! Bourgeois individualism! . . . She shrugged her shoulders and put the journal aside.

There was no message for her when she returned to her room in the evening, but she supposed that Rossi must have a good reason for not making contact. He would in any case be sure to get in touch with her in the morning. But the following day there was still no word from him and she still could not reach him on the phone. And for the first time she began to wonder. . . . Could something have gone wrong? She turned the matter over and over in her mind and at last decided to take a chance and write a guarded note to Paris. Although she had been warned not to trust the post, she felt it was impossible to remain in suspense any longer. She began to feel lonely, deserted, an

indefinable oppression of the spirit weighed on her. What *could* have gone wrong?

On September 8 there was still no news from her comrades.

Renée decided to go to Berne, even if that meant losing track of the woman. She could not any longer remain alone with this feeling of having been left high and dry . . . deserted. . . . But of course there must be some explanation, possibly something quite simple and matter-of-fact. She fought back the tears for which she could not reasonably account, but did not succeed in raising her spirits.

Back once more in Berne she made enquiries at the Hotel City. No, there was no message for her. A feeling of panic welled up and almost overwhelmed her. What could have happened? It seemed as if all the carefully woven threads had suddenly snapped. What mistake had she made? What had she done wrong to be abandoned like this, without a word . . . ?

She finally decided on a last effort to make contact before returning in desperation to Paris. If the work in Switzerland had really been concluded and Rossi had been for some reason or other unable to send her a message before leaving, he would still have had to return the car to the garage. Perhaps he had left her a note there. Even if he had not, the return of the car would indicate that they had obtained all the information they needed, in which case she would feel free to leave. Of course! How stupid not to have thought of that before!

Was it just her imagination that the clerk at the Casino Garage had seemed startled when she made her enquiry? She tried to tell herself firmly not to imagine things. And, after all, there was no possible basis for this vague, unreasonable feeling of guilt; she had done nothing of a criminal nature, even if the work had had to be shrouded in

secrecy because the Soviet Government did not want the full extent of its involvement in the Spanish war to be known. All that she had done was to trail two people, a man and a woman who were engaged in illegal traffic of arms for Franco. Every progressive-minded person could only applaud her for helping to put a stop to this kind of thing by collecting the necessary evidence for the exposure of these Franco agents.

She comforted herself with these reflections while the clerk was gone to make enquiries. He seemed to be taking a long time about it. . . . Ah, there he was at last. . . .

Yes, the car had been returned. Well, that was a relief! And the deposit money? Had that been collected? The clerk gave her a queer look and started to turn over the pages of the receipt book. Hadn't there been a message . . . ?

A car tore up to the garage, stopped with a scream of brakes. Two men got out. They came into the office and approached Renata Steiner. She looked at them with a scared face. One did not need to be told that they were police officers.

At the police station Renata Steiner learned for the first time the real nature of the work she had been engaged in. The bullet-riddled body of the 'man with glasses' had been found four days before on the Chamblandes road outside Lausanne. The murder car was the one she and Rossi had hired. She was arrested, not as a Communist, not for any political activity, but as the suspected accomplice in a murder.

CHAPTER III

RESIGNATIONS NOT ACCEPTED

The body was that of a man around forty years of age and gave the impression of having belonged to one physically robust and full of vigour at the time of his death. There were seven machine-gun bullets in the body and five in the head. Clutched in one of the hands were some strands of a woman's hair. The victim had not been robbed and in a pocket was found a Czech passport made out in the name of Hans Eberhardt.

This was the murder of which Renata Steiner had read in Montreux, to which she had, as she confessed to the police, 'attached no importance', and for aiding which she had been arrested. The assassins were the members of the GPU for whom she had been working under the impression that she was serving 'the cause' and at the same time paving the way for the realization of her dream of becoming a citizen of Soviet Russia. The two principals were Roland Abbiat, alias Rossi, and a man named Etienne Martignat, assisted by Gertrude Schildbach, a few strands of whose hair had been torn out by the victim as he struggled for his life.

The Swiss police recalled that a short time before they had received an anonymous, detailed and documented denunciation of a man named Hans Eberhardt, a person alleged to be living illegally under many aliases, all given by the informer, and a trafficker in drugs and currency. Only someone intimately acquainted with Eberhardt could possibly have known these details, assuming, that is, that the

allegations were true. At the time the police had taken no action on this; they had had no definite evidence justifying any measures against him and his papers appeared to be in order. Now this denunciation was recalled. What was Eberhardt's real identity? Who was he? What had he been doing in Switzerland and why had he been killed? The denunciation clearly indicated that he had been a member of some body with which he had fallen out.

They were not long in doubt as to his identity. The woman from Territet came forward and identified the remains as that of her husband, Ignace Reiss. H. Sneevliet, parliamentary deputy of the Revolutionary Socialist Party of Holland (he was to be captured and shot by the Nazis during the occupation), formerly the representative of the Dutch and Indonesian Communist movement at the first Congresses of the Comintern, but at this time a political opponent of Stalinism, arrived in Switzerland to give information about the dead man, whom he knew well. Sneevliet was the man shadowed in Holland by Steiner in the hope that he would lead to the discovery of Reiss.

Ignace Reiss, of Polish origin, had been a member of the Communist Party of the USSR and for many years a secret intelligence agent of the Soviet. Born in the year 1899, Reiss became a professional revolutionary at an early age, was sentenced to five years of imprisonment for Communist activity in Poland, worked under cover for the Comintern, first in the Ruhr and then in Vienna, where he was again imprisoned. On his release he went to Moscow and from then on his career as a secret agent of the Soviet Government appears to have been uninterrupted. He operated in nearly every European country without once attracting the attention of the police; he became one of the most skilled and valued of these agents. Belonging to the 'Old Guard' of the Russian Revolution, one who had over

and over again risked his life in its service, he clung obstinately to his faith in the socialist and progressive character of the Soviet regime long after it had ceased to have any relation to the ethics and ideals that undoubtedly inspired most of the early leaders. But the Moscow Trials were for him, as for many others of his stamp, a terrible and decisive blow. For the first time he gazed in horror at the hideous reality to which he had for so long shut his eyes. On July 17, 1937, he sat down and wrote a letter to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. It was a letter of resignation from the GPU. The letter reveals a little of the spiritual torment Reiss had suffered before he finally brought himself to the point of tearing out his life by the roots and trying to transplant it in a cleaner soil. He wrote:

The letter which I am addressing to you today I should have written a long time ago, on the day when the Sixteen were murdered in the cellars of the Lubianka at the command of the 'Father of the People'. (Reference to the carrying out of the sentence of the August, 1936, Moscow Trial—author). I kept silent then. I raised no voice of protest at the subsequent murders, and I thereby burdened my conscience with a grievous responsibility. My guilt is great, but I shall try to make amends, to make up for it quickly and ease my conscience.

Up to now I have followed you—from now on, not a step farther. Here our ways part! He who keeps silent at this hour becomes an accomplice of Stalin and a traitor to the cause of the working class and of Socialism.

From the age of twenty I have battled for Socialism. I do not want now, on the eve of my fifth decade, to live by the favours of a Yezhov (then chief of the GPU—since 'liquidated'—author). Behind me are sixteen years of underground service; that is no trifle—but I still have enough strength left to begin all over again. For the salvation of Socialism requires a 'New beginning'. The struggle commenced a long time ago; I shall join it.

The ballyhoo raised around the North Pole flyers was designed

to drown the cries of the victims tortured in the cellars of the Lubianka, in Minsk and Kiev, in Leningrad and Tiflis. It will not succeed. The truth is still more powerful than an engine of the maximum horse-power.

It is true that the record-breaking flyers will find it easier to win the applause of American ladies and the sport-crazed youth of both continents than we shall to win world public opinion and shake the conscience of the world. But do not be deceived; the truth will find its way; the day of judgement is nearer, far nearer, than the gentlemen of the Kremlin imagine.

International Socialism will then sit in judgement on all the crimes of the past ten years. Nothing will be forgotten or forgiven. History is a stern mistress, and the 'génial leader, father of the peoples and sun of socialism' will have to answer for all his deeds. The lost Chinese Revolution, the Red Referendum in alliance with the Nazis and the defeat of the German workers, Social Fascism and the People's Front, the interview with Howard and the embracing of Laval. Each act more 'géniale' than the other . . .

The slandered and murdered victims will all appear and the international working-class movement will restore to them their reputations; all the Kamenevs and Mrachkovskys, Smirnovs and Muralovs, the Drobnis and Serebriakovs, Mdivanis and Okudya-vas, Rakovskys and Nins, all the spies and diversionists, Gestapo agents and saboteurs. . . .

No, I am finished with all that. I am returning to freedom. Back to Lenin, to his teachings and his cause.

P.S. In 1928 I was awarded the Order of the Red Banner for services to the proletarian revolution. I am returning it herewith. To wear it simultaneously with the hangmen of the best representatives of the Russian workers is beneath my dignity.

In signing this letter of resignation Ignace Reiss signed also his death warrant. No one resigns from the GPU. *if he + Paul and*

The full details of the rapid and successful investigation of the affair by the Swiss police have been given in three essays entitled *L'Assassinat Politique et l'URSS* (V. Serge, M. Wullens, and A. Rosmer; eds. Pierre Tisé, Paris, n.d.). The role played by Renata Steiner has already been shown. It is necessary now to round off the picture by presenting

the main outlines of the evidence concerning the other participants. This evidence proves beyond refutation that the assassination was planned and carried out by GPU operatives, assisted by official Soviet representatives in France, and by the dupe Steiner.

The car from the Casino Garage in Berne was found abandoned at the Gare de Cornavin, Geneva. In it was found an overcoat bearing the trade-mark of a Madrid shop. Papers and photos found in the room in the Lausanne hotel established the identity of Gertrude Schildbach, GPU agent normally stationed in Rome. Also found was a box of chocolates impregnated with strychnine, and intended for the 'liquidation' of the Reiss family en bloc; man, woman and child. Schildbach had been on terms of close friendship with the Reiss family, and had given Reiss to understand that she had grave doubts as to the justice of Stalin's policy. She had obviously been the ideal person to serve as a decoy. Although she had had the opportunity to do so, she had apparently not been able to bring herself to give the poisoned chocolates to Madame Reiss. The fact that all her luggage had been left behind at the hotel seems to indicate that the actual assassination had taken her by surprise.

In addition to the coat in the car, other abandoned clothing revealed the identity of the two principal killers. A tailor in the fashionable Rue Scribe in Paris recognized the suit as belonging to a client with an address at No. 31 Rue de Chazelles, but absent from this address since September 2. This was Roland Abbiat, otherwise Rossi, otherwise Py—born in London, on August 15, 1905, but a citizen of Monaco; at one time a 'captain of industry' in Russia, then hotelier in Prague; a man well-known to the police and suspected of arms trafficking. Rossi, it will be recalled, was the director of Renata Steiner's activities in Switzerland;

the man who introduced her to Gertrude Schildbach. The other killer, also a client of the same tailor, was Etienne-Charles Martignat, born in 1900 at Culhat in the Puy-de-Dôme, living since 1931 at No. 18 Avenue de Anatole France, Clichy, Paris. Employed in the Clichy gas-works at a wage of thirty-seven francs a day, he had yet been able, in November, 1936, to make a journey to Brest and to stay there in one of the largest hotels at a cost of one hundred francs a day. It was also discovered that Abbiat, using the name of Rossi, had some time before applied for a passport to Mexico. Among his effects was found a detailed plan of Mexico City, on the outskirts of which lived the exile, Leon Trotsky, the man Stalin hated more than anyone else in the world.

Evidently Rossi had been preparing for a long journey as soon as his work in France and Switzerland had been completed.

The possibility that in addition to the party that did the actual killing, another had been held in reserve at Martigny and Mont-Saconnex, was shown by the chance discovery, owing to a special inspection of papers by the Swiss police, of the presence in Switzerland of Vladimir Kondratiev, a White Russian exile normally resident in Paris. He was a member of the White Russian organization, the Union of Imperial Russia, and also belonged to the Friends of the Soviet Union; a somewhat strange division of loyalties. But, as will be seen, the use of White Russians by the GPU is no unusual phenomenon. Kondratiev had arrived in Switzerland by car with three companions but shortly after his arrival received a telegram reading: 'You are free—return home.' Whereupon he immediately went back to France. All efforts to trace him beyond this point were of no avail.

The fact that the GPU recruited some of its assistants

from among members of White Russian organizations in France was further disclosed by two of these men themselves, Smirensky and Ducomet, who admitted being paid to shadow Leon Sedov, son of Leon Trotsky, and his wife. They had even taken up quarters at No. 28 Rue Lacreteille, next door to Sedov, together with an ex-Wrangel comrade of theirs. Among others, Smirensky, Ducomet, Serge Efron and Steiner worked on this shadowing job. Steiner had been told that the two they were tracking were 'Franco agents'; she apparently did not know that Sedov was Trotsky's son. This shadowing was not aimless—at Mulhouse one night Sedov narrowly escaped a trap set for him.

We have seen how the Russian consulate sent Renata Steiner to the Union pour le Repatriement des Russes en Russie; how there she met Larine, the secretary of the organization, who introduced her to Schwarzenberg, who in turn introduced her to Serge Efron, who introduced her to Ducomet, Smirensky, Rossi and others—all of them being 'friends' of the Soviet Union. The links in the chain are plain to see. The apparatus of the GPU, this comprizes leading undercover agents in direct contact with Moscow, such as the mysterious Spiegelglass referred to by Krivitsky (himself a former Soviet military intelligence man) as the top GPU man in Europe at that time; secondary agents like Larine and Schwarzenberg, ostensibly occupying positions in an apparently above-board repatriation organization; White Russian refugees anxious to return home or concerned with making some 'easy' money; and Communist Party members or close sympathizers like Steiner. In addition, however, one must recognize that every member of any official Soviet institution abroad comes, in the last analysis, under the orders of the GPU and is duty bound to give it every possible assistance. Since the USSR is a police state, that is, since the GPU exercises supreme authority

over any other body, with arbitrary power of arrest and administrative imprisonment (see Clause 8 of the Corrective Labour Code for the official Soviet admission of this fact), any and every Soviet Russian abroad comes under its jurisdiction. There is a mass of evidence confirming that all official Soviet organizations abroad also act as auxiliaries of the GPU—from the revelations of Georges Agabekov (OGPU—*The Russian Secret Terror*, New York, Brentano's, 1931) to the Royal Commission of the Canadian Government (appointed under order in Council P.C. 411, published in Ottawa, June 27, 1946). And what has so far been written on the Reiss case constitutes important confirmation of this.

The importance of such a body as the Union for the Repatriation of Russians to the work of the GPU does not need emphasizing. By means of such an organization the GPU would be put in touch with White Russians overwhelmed by nostalgia—perhaps only an exile can fully appreciate how truly morbid such nostalgia can become—or demoralized elements only too willing to betray their comrades if the pay were high enough. The fact that some of these White Russians belonged also to organizations like the Union of Imperial Russia, as in the case of Kondratiev, throws a light also on the Miller case. It can hardly be doubted that the GPU had its agents in the Federation of ex-Combatants. Was not Skobline one of them! One can well understand why two of the agents wanted by the police in the Reiss murder were also suspected of having a hand in Miller's abduction.

It is therefore not surprising to find that the information supplied by Sneevliet about the personal and political affairs of Ignace Reiss, led the police straight to the offices of the Soviet Trade Representation in Paris. Reiss's letter of resignation had been handed by him to Lydia Grosovsky,

✓ *Surv - Mark*
✓ secretary to the Trade Representation, for forwarding to Moscow. But Reiss was already suspect. He had revealed his sentiments not only to Sneevliet, with whom such confidences were in absolutely safe keeping, but also to Gertrude Schildbach and a certain 'Hans', of whom more will be heard later. Madame Grosovsky did not send the letter to Moscow; instead it went straight into the hands of Michael Spiegelglass, *i.e.* second in command of the Foreign Section of the Commissariat for Internal Affairs, that is, the GPU, and at that time in France, accredited with special powers for the 'cleansing' of Soviet organizations abroad. Reiss had counted on a few days' grace for preparing his escape but these special powers conferred on Spiegelglass enabled him to open the letter without sending it to Moscow. From that moment Reiss was a marked man, his every movement watched for the opportunity to strike.

Two leading members of the Soviet Trade Representation, Lydia Grosovsky's husband and a man named Beletsky, could not be questioned by the police—they had already left in a hurry for Moscow. But on December 11, Lydia Grosovsky was taken up for questioning. She was accompanied to the interrogation by the Secretary of the Soviet Embassy. She declared her total ignorance of the whole affair—did not know Reiss, did not recognize his photo, had never received any letter from him, did not know what business had taken her husband back to Moscow so hurriedly, did not know how long he would be away, was not an agent of the GPU—in fact, she even went as far as to say she was not sure what that meant! After a while Lydia Grosovsky felt unwell, was on the verge of fainting, and demanded to be taken immediately to the Secretary of the Soviet Embassy, who was awaiting the conclusion of her interrogation in an adjoining room. The

strongest possible pressure had been brought to bear by the Soviet Government representatives to prevent her even being questioned, but the facts uncovered by the Swiss police pointed so plainly to her involvement that the French Government, the Soviet-Franco Pact notwithstanding, could not avoid it. And on December 17 she was arrested on an extradition demand by the Swiss authorities. But wires were being pulled behind the scenes and shortly afterwards she secured her release on the modest bail of 50,000 francs. The French police continued, however, to keep her under surveillance, rightly having less confidence than the Court which released her in the power of such a sum of bail money to keep her from trying to leave the country. Unfortunately the French police had at their disposal only a car of ten horsepower, while the Soviet Trade Representation lent Madame Grosovsky a much more powerful American car. On more than one occasion she left the house of M. Sinitsin, director of this organization, where she had been given refuge, and slipped out of sight of the police guard, possibly for the purpose of attending secret conferences for discussion of the situation. The demands of the Swiss police becoming more and more insistent, it was eventually decided that her health could not stand the strain of further interrogation and she went out one day in the car, outdistanced the police escort, as on previous occasions, and did not return. Another of those involved had slipped through the closing net.

But the very fact of flight constituted strong presumptive evidence of guilt. As the Swiss paper *La Revue* commented, the enquiry had definitely established

who were the agents of the GPU who organized the trailing of Reiss over many months. . . . Unfortunately, as the French press had already revealed, as soon as the French police succeeded in uncovering a new accomplice, the latter disappeared precisely

at the moment when it was possible for steps to be taken against him. That is the case, among others, with the three Russians, Beletsky and Grosovsky, who went to Russia, and Serge Efron, who went to Spain.

Now Lydia Grosovsky had also slipped away, largely as a consequence of the French Government's yielding to the strong diplomatic pressure brought to bear in order to secure her release on bail. The wisdom or otherwise of the French Government's actions is not under discussion here. All that we seek to demonstrate by a plain recital of the facts is that the assassins of Reiss, and their accomplices, were fortunate enough to have protection in high places.

It may be argued that Ignace Reiss was, all said and done, a traitor to his country, a Russian citizen, himself a part of the Soviet Military Intelligence controlled in the last analysis by the GPU and that his death was therefore really an internal affair of the Soviet Union. Such a line of argument may seem peculiar to those who set some store in the right of asylum—the supporters, for example, of Gerhardt Eisler—and who do not believe that the limitations to national sovereignty of which we nowadays hear so much should involve the right of one country to pursue its erring citizens on to the soil of another country and there execute them on the public ways. But it is an argument that is no doubt advanced by some people, even if only in private discussion. However, this is not the problem that immediately concerns us. We are first of all concerned to show that political assassination is resorted to by Russian secret police agents abroad, and that these agents are aided and abetted by the Communist Party. That this is so has been demonstrated by the facts of the Reiss affair. This case has also thrown new light on the Koutieпов and Miller affairs. It leads to the thought that the Reiss case was no

isolated instance of a departure from the 'norm' of political struggle, no unfortunate 'lapse', but part of a system. Let us proceed with our investigation and see if the picture cannot be made even clearer.

CHAPTER IV

LINKS IN THE CHAIN

Dimitri Navachine was born in Moscow in the year 1889. The Kerensky period of the Russian Revolution found him occupied with Red Cross work. At first hostile to the Bolsheviks, he later joined in the task of restoring the economy of the country shattered by war and revolution. He worked in close contact with leading Bolsheviks, numbering among his colleagues such leaders of the new regime as Zinoviev, Kamenev and Piatakov. With Grigori Piatakov he seems to have become particularly friendly. Eventually he went to France, where he worked as an economist, and was extremely energetic and not a little influential in campaigning for better relations with the Soviet Union. He apparently accepted without question the general course of political events in the Soviet Union up to the time of the Moscow Trials. Then he changed from a warm supporter to a harsh critic. Many of those with whom he had been in close daily collaboration were accused of sabotage and wrecking, wholesale murder and treason. From his own personal experience and knowledge alone he could not but conclude that these accusations were false from top to bottom. In January, 1937, his friend Grigori Piatakov was due to come up for trial in the second of those incredible political demonstrations that shocked and bewildered the world. A few days before the opening of this trial, Navachine announced his intention of delivering a lecture on the situation in Russia. He made no bones about the severely condemnatory nature of his views. His considerable knowledge of the actual activities and the real

standpoint of the principal accused, Piatakov, as well as his knowledge of the functioning of Soviet economy, would have made any statement from him of considerable interest and value, particularly since he was not a supporter of Trotsky. A tremendous propaganda campaign was being waged by Stalin's supporters, official and unofficial, in order to get world public opinion to accept the Moscow Trials at their face value. The testimony of a man like Navachine could hardly be expected to do anything else than add to the already widespread doubts about the justice of these so-called trials.

On January 21, two days before the opening of the Court session in Moscow, and the day before he was due publicly to deliver his defence of his old friend, Dimitri Navachine was shot down and killed by an unknown assailant while taking his usual morning walk in the Bois de Boulogne.

A witness of the crime, M. Leveuf, stated that while waiting for a bus he saw two men in altercation at a distance from him of about a hundred metres. He saw one of the men fall and the other run off into the woods, but he heard no shots. Thinking it simply a brawl, he ran up to see what aid he could give the fallen man. When he reached him he found him severely wounded.

Navachine died almost immediately afterwards, without regaining consciousness. At the scene of the crime two pairs of spectacles were found, one belonging to the dead man and the other, presumably, to the assassin. This, and the fact that the assassin had worn a light-coloured raincoat, were the only clues to his identity. It was said that a short distance from the spot lay a copy of the Stalinist daily newspaper, *L'Humanité*, but if this was so it need have had no connection with the crime; it may have been that this report was simply a way of pointing the finger of suspicion at the Stalinists. Bullet shells found by the body showed

that the murder weapon was a 5 m.m. revolver, a type stated by the police to be rare in France.

The police had little to work on. Navachine's wife drew attention to the fact that, some two weeks before, a stranger had called at their home, asking to see M. Navachine 'le jeune'. He had been admitted to Navachine's study but had left after a short time without achieving the alleged purpose of his visit—unless, as was suggested in the light of later events, he had in fact been the criminal, intent on establishing the appearance of his intended victim, or even carrying out the murder then. Nothing came of this slender clue, if such it can be called; the mysterious visitor did not come forward with any explanation.

In spite of the absence of clues which could lead to the discovery of the assassin it was generally believed that the crime was political. As we have seen from the *International Press Correspondence* articles, the Stalinists did not reject this view; it was a political crime all right—but they lumped it together with the Miller and Reiss case as the work of the Gestapo. The inhumanities of the Nazis were known to all; there was nothing in the calendar of crime to which they had not sunk; it was a simple matter to add one more item to the charge sheet in the expectation that one unproved would pass unnoticed among so many proved. Navachine, of course, was an opponent of Hitler—in common with a few million others. This in itself meant precisely nothing, and there was no other evidence worth the name that could be advanced by those anxious to push the matter on one side. In a very feeble effort to find some support for this theory *Le Populaire* (January 27, 1937—the Popular Front of the Socialists and Communists was then in full bloom) stated that 'we are informed that two years ago he (*i.e.* Navachine—author) had obtained very important information concerning the military preparations of the Third

Reich'. This was about the best that the supporters of the Communist Party theory could do. It is not exactly convincing.

On the other hand, Leon Trotsky did not mince matters in stating his views. 'Dimitri Navachine knew too much about the Moscow Trials. Recently the agents of the GPU have stolen my archives in Paris. Today, they have killed Navachine. Now I fear that my son, who is considered public enemy No. 1, may be their next victim'.

It may be argued that Trotsky had an axe to grind in making this statement. However, in view of what we now know about the Reiss case it ought not to be dismissed as far-fetched. It is true that in this instance it cannot be proved on the basis of concrete evidence such as existed in the Reiss affair that the GPU stopped Navachine's mouth. But there is no doubt that they had a good reason for so doing—certainly a far more plausible motive than the one assigned to the Gestapo. In addition to a strong motive, they also had at their disposal men who later proved capable of carrying out the assassination of Reiss. And Reiss was a far more difficult man than Navachine to manoeuvre into the right position for the assassin's blow.

In the above-quoted statement reference is made to the stealing of Trotsky's archives in Paris. This was no amateur operation; it was most efficiently carried out with the aid of all the latest technique. Here again it is difficult to believe that the Gestapo was interested in Trotsky's collection of historical documents. In any case the Stalinists could not in this instance seek to make the Gestapo responsible without destroying their charge that Trotsky was hand-in-glove with that body. And there was left only one other interested party. The robbery fits in with the general pattern of events in Soviet Russia, where the suppression or destruction of documentary material on the early days of the Revolution

has been necessitated by the 'discovery' that nine-tenths of those who at one time played leading roles in that Revolution were traitors. Like Navachine, those papers of Trotsky's were witnesses; they too could throw light on the political struggle at that time reaching its culmination in Russia; they too could bring into question the accuracy of Stalin's accusations against his opponents.

Incidentally, minor operations of this nature have also taken place elsewhere. In July, 1938, the house of Jay Lovestone, then leader of an American oppositional Communist group, was broken into and personal correspondence and political documents stolen. This material was subsequently made use of by Stalinists seeking to reverse a decision suspending them from office in the United Auto Workers' trade union.

Trotsky's anxiety with regard to his son was understandable. We have already noted the attention paid to him by the agents of the GPU. In making his public statement on the murder of Navachine, Trotsky sought to make it more difficult for the GPU to strike. Should Sedov, in spite of all precautions, fall a victim to what was clearly foul play, world public opinion would know where the responsibility lay.

The death of Leon Sedov in a Paris nursing home was announced on February 16, 1938.

Was this just a stroke of luck for Stalin—that another of his most vocal and active opponents had conveniently died in circumstances that on the surface appeared 'normal'? Strangely enough the Communist press, which in the past had always given plenty of space to the subject of Trotsky's son, failed even to mention his death.

From his exile in Mexico, Trotsky cautiously hinted at the possibility that the GPU might have had a hand in his son's death, the precise details of which he did not then

know. When, however, he was informed of all the circumstances his tentative suspicion changed to forthright accusation. In an open letter to M. Penegal, examining magistrate of the Inferior Court, Department of the Seine, he wrote:

Messieurs the medical experts arrive at the conclusion that Sedov's death may be explained by natural causes. This conclusion, in the given circumstances, is void of meaning. Any sickness may *under certain conditions* lead to death. . . . The judicial investigation is not faced with a theoretical question of whether a given sickness could of itself have resulted in death but rather with a practical question whether somebody had deliberately aggravated the sickness in order to do away with Sedov as quickly as possible.

During the Bukharin-Rykov trial this year in Moscow, it was revealed with cynical frankness that one of the methods of the GPU is to assist a disease in expediting death. The former head of the GPU, Menzhinsky, and the writer Gorki were not young and were ill; their deaths, consequently, might have been readily explained by 'natural causes'. That is what the original findings of the physicians were. However, from the Moscow judicial trials mankind learned that the shining lights of the Moscow medical world, under the guidance of the former head of the secret police, Yagoda, had hastened the death of sick people by means of methods that are not subject to or are very difficult of detection. From the standpoint of the question that concerns us it is almost a matter of indifference whether the testimony of the accused was truthful or false in the particular concrete instances. It suffices that secret methods of poisoning, spreading infection, causing chills, and generally expediting death are included in the arsenal of the GPU. . . .

He goes on to point out that none of the physicians attending Sedov had expected his death; that the GPU considered the extermination of Sedov as one of its principal tasks; and that the GPU, in shadowing his every step, demonstrated that it was not pinning its hopes upon 'death from natural causes'.

Even in hospital, Sedov was compelled to register under the fictitious name of Martin, in order to render more difficult, if only

partially, the work of the bandits who were dogging his steps. In these conditions justice has no right to mollify itself with abstract formula: 'Sedov *might have* died from natural causes', so long as the contrary has not been established, namely, that the powerful GPU let slip a favourable opportunity to aid the 'natural causes'. . . . We have before us a case quite out of the ordinary, namely, a death, unexpected by the physicians themselves, of an isolated exile, following a prolonged duel between him and a mighty State-machine armed with inexhaustible material, technical and scientific resources!

Sedov had undergone a stomach operation and, in the opinion of the physicians in charge of his case, had shown such steady improvement on the first four days following upon it, that the special hospital nurse attending him was withdrawn. On the night of the 14th he was found wandering through the corridors of the hospital, naked and delirious.

The father argued:

If natural causes must have (*must have*, not *might have*) led to the tragic denouement, then by what and how explain the optimism of the physicians, as a consequence of which the patient was left completely unattended at the most critical moment? It is of course possible to try and reduce the whole case to an error of prognosis and poor medical care. However, in the materials of the investigation there is not even a mention of it. It is not difficult to understand why: if there was inadequate supervision, then does not the conclusion force itself automatically that his enemies, who never lost sight of Sedov, could have utilized this favourable situation for their criminal ends?

The surgeon who had operated on Sedov, and who knew him only under the name of Martin, appeared to be unable to account for his death. He was so puzzled by it that he even asked Sedov's wife if her husband had ever tried to commit suicide. Commenting on this fact, Trotsky continues:

One might say that the suspicions of relatives and intimates arises from their apprehensiveness. But we have before us a physician, for whom Sedov was an ordinary patient, an unknown

engineer by the name of Martin. Consequently this surgeon could not have been infected with either apprehensiveness or political bias. He orientated himself solely by those symptoms which came from the organism of the sick man. And the first reaction of this eminent and experienced physician to the unexpected, *i.e.* unaccounted for by any 'natural causes', turn in the case, was to suggest an attempt at suicide on the part of the patient. Isn't it clear, isn't it most palpably evident that had the surgeon known at the moment the identity of his patient and the conditions of his life he would instantly have asked: Couldn't this have been the work of assassins? . . .

It is not a question of a chance cut-throat who murders a wayfarer on the highway, and vanishes after the murder. It is a question of a very definite international gang which has already committed more than one crime on the territory of France, and which makes use of and cloaks itself with friendly diplomatic relations. . . . The organizers of the crime were GPU agents, the fake functionaries of Soviet institutions in Paris. The perpetrators were the agents of these agents recruited from the White émigrés, French or foreign Stalinists and so on. The GPU could not fail to have its agents in a Russian clinic in Paris or among the circles closest to it. . . .

It is impossible not to be impressed by the logic of this argument. Were this an isolated case of the death in peculiar circumstances of a politically prominent figure, it might be dismissed as having no connection with GPU activities. But in the light of what we already know about these activities the suspicion that the GPU had a hand in this case too must necessarily remain strong, even if no concrete proof is available. That the GPU desired Sedov's death is indisputable. That it had already once attempted it is known. That it had its agents constantly dogging his footsteps, awaiting a favourable opportunity to strike, was revealed in the investigation of the Reiss murder. The reader may or may not suspend judgement in this instance, but the next case we have to consider, that of Rudolf Klement, will help him to understand, if he does not

already understand, why Trotsky was so positive in his belief that the GPU murdered Sedov.

Rudolf Klement was the German translator (under the pen name of Walter Steen) of many of Trotsky's writings; had been his secretary in Turkey, and at the time of which we write was secretary to the International Bureau of the Trotskyist Fourth International. On July 16, 1938, the Press Bureau of the French Section of that organization issued the following statement:

This morning French members of the Fourth International disturbed by a two days' absence of Rudolf Klement (alias Camille) . . . discovered that he had disappeared from his residence. At the same time, a copy of a letter addressed to Leon Trotsky and signed Rudolf Klement was received by one of them. It was post-marked Perpignan, on the frontier of governmental Spain. . . .

This letter, addressed to 'Mr. Trotsky', stated that the writer was breaking with the Fourth International on the grounds of its impotency and its 'objective collaboration with the Fascists', but added that no 'public exposure' of the Trotskyists would be made. Up to the moment of his disappearance Klement had given none of his friends the slightest reason to suppose that he had any political differences of opinion with the organization in which he held such a trusted and responsible position. This letter was therefore a considerable surprise to his comrades, particularly since the minutest political differences within the Trotskyist movement were always the subject of keen and lengthy discussion, which there was never any hesitation in publicly airing. Prior to the receipt of this letter there had been absolutely no indication from Klement that he was preparing for such a break. His comrades were naturally puzzled. The tone of the letter so closely resembled the language of their Stalinists' opponents, that it could only be accounted for by the startling assumption that Klement

must all along have been an agent of the GPU. But Klement's past history, minutely examined in the light of this letter, gave no support whatever to such an assumption. Was the letter genuine? Had Klement really written it?

The name of Carleton Beals was mentioned in the letter, and it was written 'Bills', that is, in the manner in which a Russian not familiar with English spelling would write it, using the English 'i', which a Russian would tend to pronounce as 'ee'. Having met and spoken with Klement, the author can testify to the fact that his knowledge of English was sufficient for him not to have made such an elementary mistake. Moreover, whoever had written the letter had sent out three copies, each of which had been signed in a different way—Klement, Adolphe, and Frederic. Adolphe and Frederic were two of the three pseudonyms used at one time by Klement. But his third pseudonym, Camille, and the one that he had been using for the two years previous to his disappearance, was on none of the letters. The recipients of the copies naturally wondered why none of them had been signed 'Camille'. The conclusion they drew was that the writer of the letter wished to emphasize its genuineness by thus demonstrating his knowledge of the pseudonyms used a considerable time before. But why should Klement have resorted to this, when it would have been so much simpler and more effective to have handed over two of the letters to his French comrades in person? Or why not at least on one of the letters make use of the current pseudonym? If, that is, the writer knew of it. . . .

Since the letter was typewritten, with only the date and the signature in ink, it was not possible to declare it a forgery from a comparison of handwriting, but Klement's friends nonetheless refused to accept it as having been voluntarily written by him. Their reaction, however, may very well be put down to the desire not to admit a grave

defection on the part of a leading member of their organization. But the contents of the letter itself unquestionably gave strong support to their contention that the letter was phoney.

The dogmatic character of Stalinist ideology, combined with the Communist Party method of organization, its army-like discipline and fundamental lack of democratic freedom of thought, has a peculiar result. It results in the creation of a special type of person, using a special jargon, with a marked style of speaking and writing. It is impossible for anyone who has been thoroughly trained in the Stalinist school to disguise this fact if he has remained faithful to its teachings (and often even if he hasn't). The method of organization, with its 'fraction' meetings at which the 'line' to be taken by any member or group of members at non-Party meetings is laid down, creates a recognizable, stereotyped manner. For the 'line' itself is never the result of independent thinking on the part of those instructed to boost it; is never the outcome of a free play of ideas among the membership, but always conforms to the 'general line' handed down from above. Add to this the training, which aims at stamping out individual initiative in thinking, that is, at preventing any 'deviation from the line', and the consequence is necessarily a close adherence to certain formulæ, certain turns of speech that bear an unmistakable trade mark. Even single words can be dangerous in the mouth of a Stalinist if they have not, so to speak, received official sanction. (There is the story of a Stalinist who betrayed herself by the use of the single word 'concrete', a favourite adjective in the jargon used by Communist Party members. Up to the moment of employing that word she had managed to disguise her Party membership. . . .) It is better to stick to the well-known phrase than to aspire to flights of verbal fancy, which may lead to

'ideological errors'. A new member of the Party, for example, will be told: Read the *Worker*, repeat what you have read—and you can't go wrong. In addition spokesmen for the Communist Party at any trade union, co-operative, or other gathering are of course selected beforehand on the basis of their ability correctly and effectively to interpret the Party line. It is therefore no exaggeration to say that one with a knowledge of Communist Party jargon can detect a Communist almost as soon as he opens his mouth to speak, or with the first sentence he may write.

If the reader fully appreciates this peculiar fact, it will not be difficult for him to accept that an analysis of the contents of the letter seemingly written by Klement will show if it was written by a member of the Stalinist school or not.

In effect, the style of this letter was a faithful reproduction of that school; the content was a clear echo of Prosecutor Vyshinsky's accusations in the Moscow Trials. There were the same charges of a 'bloc' between the Trotskyists and the Fascists; the same reference to the 'Bonapartist manners' of Trotsky; the same amalgam of political personalities having quite different, even fundamentally opposed viewpoints, but lumped together as allies of the arch-demon Trotsky; and there is the same complete disregard for accuracy of historical facts. Thus, for an example of this last point, Heinrich Brandler, former leading German Communist and one-time member of the Saxony Cabinet, with Gerhardt Eisler as his secretary, is cited as a Trotskyist who had broken with the organization. In fact he had never been a member of that organization and had always consistently opposed it. Klement could not have been unaware of this. This deliberate lie, easy enough to expose as such, was on a level with the rest of the letter which displayed the same lack of logical connection as the 'evidence' of the Moscow Trials had done. There could be

only two possible explanations for the letter: it was either a forgery or, what amounts to the same thing, signed at pistol-point; or it was written voluntarily by Klement in the style which bears the unmistakable hallmark of the GPU. But there was absolutely nothing in Klement's past to make this second variant in the slightest degree credible.

The Trotskyists immediately charged the GPU and its Communist Party aides with kidnapping Klement, and forging the letter. For the Communists to have cleared themselves of this charge would have been a simple matter. If Klement was one of their men, or if he had just deserted to them, as the letter attempted to make out, it was only necessary for him to come forward and in person substantiate his charges against his former comrades and their organization. Such a step would have blown sky-high the Trotskyist counter-charges; it would also have constituted a tremendous political victory for the Stalinists. But he did not come forward. Had this been Russia and not France it is highly probable that he would have appeared at a public trial and repeated the contents of the letter, with all the necessary trimmings. But he was never seen alive again—in France or elsewhere. His friends were called by the police one morning to establish whether a headless corpse fished out of the River Marne could possibly be his remains. They identified this gruesome find, from the general physical characteristics and a feature peculiar to his physiological make-up, as the body of Rudolf Klement.

The execution of this young German refugee was undoubtedly the work of the same organization whose activities on French soil are already partly known to us. His case is another link in the chain of political assassinations carried out by the GPU in many countries.

The mysterious circumstances of Willi Muenzenberg's

death also merit attention. Muenzenberg was the originator of the now familiar and widespread 'fellow-traveller' method of organization. An adherent of the socialist movement from his early youth, he lived for some time in Switzerland, where he came in contact with the men who were later to become prominent leaders of the Russian Revolution—Lenin, Trotsky, Zinoviev, Radek and others. He joined the embryonic German Communist Youth International (YCI) at its first Congress in 1920. In 1921 he was responsible for launching the Workers' International Aid, an organization designed to capitalize the world-wide sympathy for the Revolution among intellectuals, the middle and working classes in order to relieve famine in Russia, and which later aided workers on strikes in various countries by collecting funds, organizing soup-kitchens, and so on. To aid this work he founded the journal *Sowjet Russland in Bildern*, which later became the *Arbeiter Illustrierte* with a circulation of nearly a million copies. He was the most energetic and resourceful exponent and builder of 'satellites' revolving, at however apparently remote a distance, around the Soviet sun and drawing into their orbit hundreds of thousands of trade-unionists, socialists and 'progressively-minded' liberal intellectuals (cf. Ruth Fischer's *Stalin and German Communism*, OUP, 1948, for a detailed examination of the role he played). The whole art and essence of this method consisted, and consists, in painting all things Soviet in dazzling attractive colours and all things non-Soviet in the gloomiest of hues; of depicting all Soviet actions as motivated by a love for humanity at large, and all non-Soviet actions as in the interests of a selfish minority of capitalists; of ceaselessly repeating that the Soviet Union is the one country sincerely desirous of peace and that all other countries, whatever their expressed pretensions, follow a policy that must inevitably lead to war. The most

high-powered and skilful advertising campaign of the commercial world pales into insignificance beside this boosting of Soviet Russia and a great deal of credit for its success must go to Willi Muenzenberg.

Muenzenberg's standing in the Stalinist world was consequently high, but, in common with nearly every other leading Communist in Germany, he too came to be looked askance at by the masters in Moscow.

In 1936 Muenzenberg was unable to keep his doubts about the Moscow Trials to himself and he confided in F. Brupbacher, a former leader of the Swiss Communist Party. His view became known to some members of the Trotskyist groups in Switzerland, who were preparing a libel suit against the Stalinist press on behalf of Trotsky. They announced that they intended to subpoena Muenzenberg to testify. This alone would have been enough to place him on the GPU black list. Invited to Moscow in 1937, he evaded a direct refusal by entering a sanatorium near Paris—whatever else he may have been, Muenzenberg was nobody's fool, he had a pretty good idea what his chances were of surviving such a visit (cf. *Under Two Dictators*, Margaret Buber, Gollancz, 1949, for details of the fate of German Communists who took refuge in the Soviet Union after Hitler's conquest of power).

He was in France when the war broke out, a refugee from German Nazism, and there was interned. When the invaders began to cut through France as a knife goes through butter, the interned refugees were in most camps told to make themselves scarce. With two Stalinist companions Muenzenberg fled. A few days later he was found hanged in a wood some miles from the internment camp.

If Muenzenberg had not been Muenzenberg there would perhaps be no mystery about his death. The verdict would have been suicide. But in view of the fate that overtook so

many German Stalinists who fled to Soviet Russia after Hitler took power, one wonders. . . . What were the two men with whom he fled doing when he hung himself? Who were they? What became of them? And why should Muenzenberg commit suicide when he was within a few miles of the French Riviera, where he had good friends, a refuge, money, the possibility of getting out of the country? He was fifty years of age at the time of his death; he had, in the opinion of those who were close to him shortly before the tragedy, lost none of his characteristic vigour and zest for life; he was full of new schemes for the future, and gave no impression of being in any way downcast over the course of events.

In this case Stalinists did not accuse the Gestapo. They accepted the verdict of suicide. This possibility cannot, perhaps, be excluded, but the element of doubt remains; one also cannot exclude the possibility that the GPU seized a convenient opportunity to get rid of a man with wide influence in 'progressive' circles, whose loyalty to Stalinism was strongly suspect, and who might therefore be capable of raising his voice against those he had served so long and so faithfully. And he would certainly have had some interesting stories to tell. . . .

On the Coolsiel, main thoroughfare of Rotterdam, stands the Atlantic café. One day in May, 1938, a man came out of this café carrying a small parcel wrapped in brown paper. It was a bright spring morning and the Coolsiel was crowded. The man had not gone far along the road when the parcel in his hand exploded with great violence, killing him outright and injuring a number of passers-by.

According to the passport found on the body the dead man was a Dutchman named Josef Novack, who had

arrived from Germany a few days before. On checking the passport, however, the police found it to be false.

But the real identity of the victim was soon revealed. Shortly after the outrage a man arrived by air from Vienna and enquired for 'Josef Novack' at his hotel. This man, who gave his name as Bora, was immediately arrested by the police and confronted with the corpse. At the sight of it Bora appeared to be genuinely overcome with grief. His voice choked with sobs, he cried out repeatedly, 'My leader, my leader!' Bora told the police that the dead man, whose secretary he had been, was Lieut.-Colonel Evhen Konovalc, leader of the Ukrainian Nationalist movement. Konovalc, he said, had come to Holland in order to arrange for the printing and transport of Ukrainian Nationalist propaganda material intended for distribution inside the USSR. Bora was also travelling on a false Dutch passport. His real name was Ladislav Baranovsky.

Evhen Konovalc was the man who took over the leadership of the Ukrainian Nationalist movement after the assassination of Simon Petlura in Paris on May 25, 1926. Konovalc, a naturalized Lithuanian, had been an officer in the Austrian army during the first world war, and had fought on the Russian front, where he had been taken prisoner in 1915. When the Ukrainian Rada declared an independent Ukraine in November, 1917, he was active in forming the 'Free-corps' as the military support of General Petlura's movement. After the failure of this movement, sealed by the Soviet-Polish Treaty of Riga, Petlura and Konovalc had gone into exile, where the latter, as head of the Ukrainian Military Organization, had been responsible for various terrorist acts against members of the Polish Government regarded as particularly prominent in their opposition to Ukrainian nationalism. The Ukrainian Military Organization also carried on an active campaign in

the Soviet Ukraine in favour of independence and secession from the USSR.

Konovalec's death was clearly political. But who was the actual assassin and what were the forces behind him?

According to information given to the Dutch police by Baranovsky, Konovalec had been approached more than a year before by a person claiming to be an ardent supporter of the Ukrainian Nationalist movement. This man gave financial support to the movement and became a confidant of Konovalec, although he was apparently not fully trusted by some of the other members of the organization. This man went under the name of Waluch, and he had recently had several appointments with Konovalec in Holland. At each of these meetings he had presented Konovalec with a small parcel containing a gift, sometimes together with money for the funds. Konovalec had more than once commented on Waluch's generosity.

Thus the manner in which the bomb was planted on the unsuspecting victim is clear.

But Waluch himself vanished into thin air after the successful accomplishment of his mission and no trace of him was ever afterwards discovered.

On whose orders did he act? Once again we are faced with the question to which the concrete evidence of the actual crime supplies no answer. But in all such assassinations the political motivation is always and necessarily a clear pointer to those behind the assassin. And once again the GPU can be shown to have had a very strong reason for wishing to get rid of Konovalec.

Commenting on the case, the Dutch paper *Handelsblad* noted the remarkable silence of the Soviet press. Remarkable because right up to his death the Soviet press had been conducting, particularly in the Ukraine, an extremely fierce campaign against Konovalec. We have also noted the same

reluctance to comment in the Reiss and Sedov affairs. Then also, in spite of the fact that the Soviet authorities were implicated up to the hilt in the Reiss affair, a discreet silence was maintained. In the same way when Trotsky's death later created a world-wide sensation, they adhered to the adage: least said, soonest mended. There were, of course, cogent reasons for this silence in the cases of Reiss and Trotsky: anything that the Soviet press might have published could only have immersed them deeper in the mire. But that Konovalc's death should have been passed over without any comment whatever, when there was, on the face of it, no concrete evidence to connect his death with the GPU, is indeed surprising—unless those controlling the Soviet press knew, or suspected that the GPU had a hand also in this matter.

The *Daily Telegraph* (June 11, 1938) quoted a Moscow correspondent's report to the Norwegian *Aftenpost* that M. Theodore Butenko, the Soviet Charge d'Affairs in Bucharest, who had refused to comply with an order to return to Moscow, had been condemned to death in his absence. The GPU 'Flying Squad', said the paper, had been charged with the task of carrying out the sentence. The 'Squad' was believed to be then 'resting', after having executed an assignment in Holland, in a West European country known to have 'very friendly relations' with the Soviet Union. (Butenko disappeared in Bucharest in February, 1938, and has not been seen since.)

It can be argued that the Polish authorities also had a motive for disposing of Konovalc. But although political assassinations in which the hand of the Polish Government has been suspected have not been unknown in Poland, there is in this case no evidence to suggest that the Polish regime, at any rate up to the time of which we write, maintained any 'squads' of kidnappers and killers outside its own

national territory. Moreover, at that time relations between the Polish and German Governments were friendly and Konoalec's headquarters were located in Berlin. Had the activities he directed been viewed with alarm by the Polish Government it could certainly have demanded action against him, and such a demand would have been satisfied. Both Polish and German policy in relation to the USSR may have appeared equivocal, but there is little doubt that they were to a certain extent in step with one another. In these circumstances Konoalec's activities would not have been tolerated if they had not been largely, if not entirely, directed against the Soviet Ukraine. It must also be remembered that Konoalec's terrorist activities against members of the Polish Government were undertaken during the Pilsudski regime, when the excesses and brutalities of the 'pacification' of the Polish Ukraine were at their height. The Polish Government would seem, therefore, to have had little or no motive for going to the extreme of political assassination.

The Soviet Government, on the other hand, was very much alarmed by the problem of Ukrainian nationalism. The purges aimed at sweeping the USSR clean of all known, suspected or potential oppositional elements were particularly intense in the Ukraine, and one of the main charges against the accused was that they were in contact with the Ukrainian Military Organization abroad. That the Soviet authorities had good cause for alarm at the strength and persistence of this movement for independence was sharply confirmed during the last war, when Ukrainian military formations waged guerilla war against both Hitler and Stalin. The Soviet Government had the strongest possible motive for eliminating Konoalec from the political scene. The assassination of Konoalec links up with that

of Petlura, and with the 'disappearance' of Koutieпов and Miller.

The cases discussed in this chapter should be looked at in the light of the evidence presented to prove the existence on French soil of a body of assassins directed by the GPU, backed by the resources of an entire State-machine, supported by the diplomatic representatives of that State, and with its activities smoke-screened by Communist Party propaganda. The Reiss investigation proved the existence of such an organization. In this case the members panicked after the deed; intent on making their getaway as quickly as possible, they left behind a vital witness—in the person of Renata Steiner. Can it be doubted that most, if not all, of the other crimes here set forth were links in the chain?

In weighing this question let us recall the following words of Radek's final plea at his trial in 1937:

... we must say to the Trotskyite elements in France, Spain and other countries—and there are such—that the experience of the Russian revolution has shown that Trotskyism is a wrecker of the labour movement. *We must warn them that if they do not learn from our experience, they will pay for it with their heads.*

(Official Report published by the People's Commissariat of Justice in the USSR, Moscow, 1937, p. 550; author's emphasis.)

Could anything be clearer?

Among Reiss's effects was a notebook in which this warning had been jotted down. Reiss understood its significance. He issued a private warning to leading militants of the anti-Stalin wing in the workers' movement. For he knew that the words were Radek's, but that the threat was the GPU's. . . .

CHAPTER V

EUROPE'S LITTLE RUSSIA

Lenin once characterized Spain as the 'little Russia of Europe'. The description is apt, perhaps more so today under the dictatorship of Franco than when it was coined. Lenin referred to the semi-feudal, semi-capitalist economy of Spain, which was reflected in a general social and political situation remarkably analogous to that of pre-revolutionary Russia. But during a period of the Spanish Civil War the analogy took on another aspect: for, because of the military aid given by Soviet Russia to the Spanish Government, the Soviet representatives in that country exercised a considerable political control there. The extent of this control, the degree to which the Stalinists felt themselves masters, is expressed without ambiguity in the following quotation taken from the organ of the Communist Party of the USSR:

So far as Catalonia is concerned the cleaning up of the Trotskyist and anarcho-Syndicalist elements has already begun and *it will be carried out with the same degree of energy as in the USSR.* (*Pravda*, December 17, 1936; author's emphasis.)

In view of the vast wave of arrests, summary executions and deportations to remote regions of Siberia that accompanied the first Moscow Trial (August 19-24, 1936), there could be no mistaking the precise meaning of the words 'cleaning up'. Stalin's political opponents in Spain would be dealt with in the same manner as they had been dealt with in Russia. And it must be borne in mind that 'political opponent' means, in the Communist vocabulary, anyone who questions the infallibility of Stalin. ✓

Yet the Communist Party of Spain prior to the outbreak of the Civil War had been a numerically small organization with little influence over the mass of the population, and even at the end of 1936 had by no means succeeded in breaking the great hold over the workers of the anarchists and socialists, who were, moreover, particularly strong in Catalonia. How, then, could *Pravda* be so confident that Russian policy would dominate 'so far as Catalonia was concerned'? The reason for this confidence was that *Pravda* knew of a power in Spain that had nothing to do with political parties; a power that, while it worked in and through these parties when possible and expedient, was yet separate from them, uncontrolled by any popular body; and a power whose leading strings went back to the Kremlin. *Pravda* knew that the GPU was in Spain.

The Catalanian sector of the Spanish political front was considered of particular importance by the Stalinists, because this was the most industrially developed area of Spain and consequently possessed the most highly organized and politically advanced elements of the working class. It was there that a most dangerous competitor, the Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista (Workers' Party of Marxist Unity), commonly called the POUM, had risen during the early months of Franco's attack to the status of a mass party. This is not the place to trace the history of the POUM; it is sufficient for our purpose to point out that it arose largely as a result of a breakaway from the Stalinist Party, that in contradistinction from that Party it claimed to carry on the true traditions and principles of Communism, and that many of its members were greatly influenced by the ideas of Leon Trotsky, although the organization as such consistently dissociated itself from his views on the strategy of revolutionaries in Spain, and, reciprocally, Trotsky himself made no secret of his fundamental disagreement with

the policy of POUM. The official Trotskyists in Spain never rose above the position of a negligible and completely uninfluential sect. Although both before and during the Civil War the numerical strength of the POUM was always relatively small compared with that of the anarchists and socialists, it was still much superior to that of the Spanish Communist Party, disorientated and enfeebled by constant Comintern dictated cleansings, until the arrival of Soviet military aid and technical personnel boosted it to a power in the councils of the Republican Government.

The leader of the POUM, Andreas Nin, had formerly played a role in the top circles of the Stalinist apparatus. An early and ardent proponent of the Russian Revolution, he had in 1920 been sentenced to death for his revolutionary activity and had fled to Russia, where he became a member of the Profintern (Red International of Trade Unions), an organization set up as a counter influence to the trade unions under the dominance of the Second International. In Stalin's struggle to control the Russian Communist Party, and thereby also the Comintern, Nin sided with the Zinoviev-Trotsky opposition bloc of 1927. After a speech in support of Trotsky at the Fourth Congress of the Profintern in 1928, he was removed from his post and arrested by the GPU. In 1930, together with his wife and seven-year-old child, he was expelled from the Soviet Union, without papers or money. He managed to make his way back to Spain, where he was again arrested by the Spanish authorities, but the rise of the popular tide against Spanish absolutism secured his release. It was mainly owing to his leadership that the majority of the Catalan membership of the Communist Party broke away from the dictatorship of the Comintern in 1931. After the proclamation of the Republic in that year the working-class movement made great strides forward, and although he was twice arrested by

the Republican authorities, once in 1932 and again in 1933, it was not possible to hold him merely on the charge of carrying on revolutionary propaganda since his long record of battle for socialist ideals had given him a considerable standing in the now influential workers' movement. His standing among the workers, coupled with his unrelenting opposition to Stalinism, inevitably brought him the intense hatred of the Communist Party.

The rapid growth in numbers and influence of the POUM after the outbreak of the Civil War made an offer of entry into the Catalan *Generalitat* inevitable. The offer was accepted and Nin became Minister of Education. The Stalinists, rejecting democracy within the workers' movement—since consultation with the rank-and-file and acceptance of its views would make impossible the overnight switches in policy required from time to time by the Kremlin—recognized, as the above quotation from *Pravda* shows plainly enough, that the POUM was a threat to their plans. Following the lead given by the Russian press, a private circular distributed to all 'locals' of the Catalan PSUC* in December, 1937, stated:

The POUM occupies a counter-revolutionary position; the line taken by the POUM is identical with the provocative policy of international Fascism. All members of the PSUC must realise the criminal role played by the POUM. The leaders of the POUM must be unmasked as *agents provocateurs* introduced into the working class to destroy it, and they must be presented as such to the workers.

These words show the particular role assigned to the Communist Party in the struggle against Stalin's opponents in the working-class movement. It is the task of the Com-

* The PSUC (Partido Socialista Unificado de Catalunya) was formed by the merger of the Catalan Socialist Party with the Communist Party, along the lines of the technique now made familiar by events in Russian-occupied Germany and Eastern Europe.

munist Party, and this applies of course to all countries, to create the required 'public opinion' which makes possible the physical suppression of opponents. A high-pressure campaign of abuse and levelling of charges based upon conscious distortion of facts and downright falsehoods—such a barrage precedes the physical attack, covers it while in process and continues when it has been completed.

Underlining the Soviet-inspired character of the charges against the POUM, the Soviet Consul in Barcelona accused this party of having 'sold out to International Fascism'. The *Trebala*, daily organ of the PSUC, followed this up by calling the POUM leaders 'agents of the Gestapo and Trotskyists'. An example of the depths to which this campaign sunk has been given by Henry Beattie, one-time member of the Canadian Communist Party and a fighter in the International Brigade. Beattie related in the press on his return from Spain and his breach with the Stalinists, how he had been instructed to declare at public meetings that the 'Trotskyists' in Spain 'used to kill off wounded militiamen'. Beattie declared that he had carried out this instruction 'in submission to Party discipline' (cf. L. Trotsky's article in the Scottish Labour paper *Forward*, December 11, 1937). This was part of the 'ideological' preparation for the events of May, 1937, and the Barcelona 'Moscow Trial' of 1938. It was the screen of slander behind which the GPU could carry out its assassinations.

The May 'uprising' has been presented by the Stalinists, and accepted by their dupes, as a revolt of irresponsible anarchist and POUM elements against republican discipline; as an effort on the part of these people to wrest control from the Republican Government in Barcelona; as a deliberate, Franco-inspired disruption of the unity of action of Republican Spain against Fascism. In reality, as their actions at the time plainly demonstrated, the anarchists'

leaders had no desire to seize sole power in Barcelona. Nor could the POUM, which clung to the 'old fashioned' Marxism of Karl Marx and opposed the Blanquist tactics of the Stalinists, have so run counter to its principles as to attempt a *coup d'état* when in an obvious minority position. The true origin of the Barcelona street battle of May has been hinted at by Fred Copeman, former leading British Communist and member of the International Brigade. In his book *Reason in Revolt* (Blandford Press Ltd., 1948, p. 119) he writes:

It was decided that Wally Tapsall should make an enquiry on behalf of the Brigade. On his return he reported what he had found, being fully aware of the serious political repercussions that were likely to spring from it. He was of the opinion that the Spanish Communist Party were not unconnected with the uprising, and that the POUM were being used as a blind.

It is not here possible to unravel the whole tangled background of the May uprising, a detailed and fully documented story of which, exposing the role played by the Stalinists, will be found in Felix Morrow's *Revolution and Counter-revolution in Spain* (Pioneer Publishers, New York, 1938). But it should be understood that throughout Spain a duality of power came into existence after the outbreak of the Civil War and that this duality of power found its sharpest expression in Catalonia. An analogy may be made with the situation in Russia when the Kerensky Government faced the threat of Kornilov's attack on Petersburg (Leningrad). United against Kornilov, the workers were yet urged by the Bolsheviks to establish and make secure the basis of their own independent power. In a like manner the workers in Catalonia, united against Franco, were also involved in a political struggle, veiled for the most part but nevertheless existing, to secure their hegemony, to conduct the war as a revolutionary social war on behalf of the

working masses and not for the aims of a bourgeois democracy, such as had been achieved in England and France by the revolutions of 1642 and 1789. Confused as the POUM and Anarchist leadership of the revolutionary wing of the workers' movement was, and inadequate to cope with the situation as it proved to be, it nonetheless expressed the broad, elemental drive of its rank-and-file towards a new social order. The Spanish Communists, on the contrary, supported the 'Kerensky' trend, in obedience to the will of Stalin, whose Popular Front tactic was then in full swing, and who at that time did not wish to appear as the 'exporter' of revolution. Aided by the Stalinists, the republican-democratic elements in Spain engaged in an unceasing battle to whittle down the conquests of the revolutionary wing and to restore 'normality'. Workers' militia and workers' police which were organized by and were directly responsible to the revolutionary parties had to be eliminated; workers' control over production had to be abolished. Key point of this conflict in Barcelona was the Central Telephone Exchange, in the hands of the anarchists and the POUM, and it was the struggle to control this that gave rise to the bloody events of May, 1937.

On May 3 three lorry loads of Assault Guards arrived at the Telephone Exchange. They were under the personal command of the Commissioner of Public Order, Salas, a member of the PSUC. That was the spark that exploded the powder. The subsequent fighting demonstrated that anarchist controlled forces were powerful enough, had their leaders so desired, to take over the government. They did not do so. The workers who had resisted the attempt to smash workers' control of the vital Telephone Exchange were called upon by the anarchists' leaders to withdraw; they were disarmed; the barricades set up in the streets were torn down.

It would perhaps be too much to say that the May 'uprising' was engineered by the Stalinists solely with the purpose of crushing the POUM and discrediting the anarchists. The event arose inevitably out of the circumstances of dual power and wider struggle for dominance, a struggle waged more efficiently, skilfully and, above all, ruthlessly by the Stalinists-cum-Republicans than by their opponents. But there can be no doubt at all that the Stalinists provoked this particular incident and then used every possible trick to throw the responsibility on to their opponents and make it appear as a 'stab in the back' of Loyalist Spain. If they could succeed in removing the anarchists and the POUM from the political scene they had no doubt of their ability to gain the ascendancy over the moderate Republican elements with whom they were then running in harness. Under the pretence of fighting for a democratic republic they would firmly establish in Europe an outpost of Stalin's totalitarian empire.

The Stalinists concentrated their major fire against the POUM. José Diaz, leader of the Spanish Communists, declared at the Plenum of the Central Committee of the Party in May, 1937: 'The POUM must be eliminated from the political life of the country'. An article by the Stalinist deputy, Miguel Valdes, published in the Lerida newspaper, *U.H.P.*, expressed the policy in plainer terms: 'It is necessary', he wrote, 'to exterminate Nin and his little group of friends'.

On October 28, 1936, the first Russian tanks appeared on the Loyalist front. On November 8 the International Brigade, organized and recruited by the Stalinists but at first containing men not entirely subservient to them, made its appearance in beleaguered Madrid. Russian tanks, Russian airplanes, Russian arms and Russian ammunition—there were the material foundations upon which Stalin's

influence was based, upon which his temporary dictatorship in Loyalist Spain rested. Little as the military aid proved in the final analysis to have been and poor as the quality of some of the material was, it was yet something, and in comparison with the aid coming from the democratic countries of the West it was magnificent largesse.

Small wonder that the GPU had its way and found no one to resolutely oppose it in the upper councils of the Loyalist Government.

So in June, 1937, the Soviet agents in Spain felt themselves sufficiently entrenched to begin putting into execution the threats made against the POUM. Its leaders were arrested and charged, of course, with espionage on behalf of Franco. Today the world has become used to charges of this nature made by Stalin against his opponents and trials based on them have become a commonplace in the Eastern European countries under his domination. But it was in Spain in the year 1937 that the first dress-rehearsal of this tactic was carried out on non-Soviet soil.

Shortly after the arrest of the POUM leaders, Andreas Nin was reported missing. It transpired that in fact Nin had not been officially arrested.

The news of the charges made against the POUM and the disappearance of Nin led to a movement of protest throughout the international working-class movement. In mid-August the late James Maxton, leader of the British Independent Labour Party, went to Spain on a tour of investigation. As a result of his enquiries he stated in a duly notarised report:

M. Irujo, Minister of Justice, M. Zugazagoitia, Minister of the Interior, M. Prieto, Minister of War, have all insisted on the fact that the Spanish Government was not responsible for the disappearance of Nin. M. Irujo asserted: 'Nin has never been in a government prison. . . . Nin has never been in a state prison. He

disappeared in a private house which was not a prison.' It was, said M. Irujo, a villa surrounded by a garden situated in the town of Alcala de Henares, an empty hotel used specially for Nin. . . . M. Irujo declared that there were no proofs of espionage against any of the members of the Executive of POUM, and that the famous document 'N' was worthless.*

Stalin's 'Moscow Trial' in Barcelona did not work out quite so smoothly as those organized in Russia itself. In the first place, the political opinions and activities of the accused were too well known outside as well as inside Spain. In the second place the conditions for the process of moral and physical torture necessary to the manufacture of confessions did not exist in Spain. In these circumstances it was found necessary to put off the trial from one month to another. But the Stalinist influence was steadily growing. Prieto was at last dropped by Negrin†, head of the Loyalist Government, who was well under the thumb of the Stalinists.

It has been suggested that the removal of Prieto was the high-water mark of Stalinist influence in Spain. At any rate it was not until after a combination of political pressure at

* The document 'N' constituted the major, if not the only 'evidence' against the accused. It consisted of a scaled plan of Madrid and photographs of airfields, etc., found in possession of a French spy who at first declared that he had relations with the POUM and then later in court retracted this confession, alleging that it had been extracted from him by police 'pressure'. The whole circumstances surrounding this document, which, moreover, the Minister of Defence declared was of absolutely no value from a military viewpoint, were so shady that at the trial of the POUM leaders the charges of espionage were dropped, in spite of the fact that this charge constituted the main body of the indictment.

† Note his words on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the Russian Revolution (published in *The Communist International*, 10: 11: 12; 1937, p. 1231) under the title 'Greetings from the C.C. of the Communist Party of Spain': 'With exceptional perspicacity, Stalin has directed the life of the people along the road upon which it has achieved the historic stage when the ideal had been transformed into life. . . . The Soviet Union has demonstrated to Europe its role as a civilized people, which is the disinterested friend of peace and maintains respect for other peoples.'

the top, and strong-arm tactics together with a campaign of slander and innuendo from below had succeeded in eliminating Prieto from the scene that the trial of the POUM leaders was at last begun on October 11, 1938, that is, eleven months after their arrest and imprisonment.

During all this time a widespread agitation had been conducted on their behalf throughout the working-class movement abroad. The day after the trial opened Vincent Tewson, Secretary of the British Trade Union Council, interviewed the Spanish Ambassador and expressed, on behalf of his organization, his disquiet at the whole affair and the conviction that the accused were entirely innocent of the charges brought against them. Fenner Brockway, then General Secretary of the ILP, declared that:

As a result of my interviews and conversations I gained the conviction that the responsible Spanish authorities consider that the persecution and oppression exercised against the POUM spring from political motives and that nothing justifies the accusations of a criminal character or of treason which have been made against them by a certain political section.

This was the general opinion of all those in the workers' movement not completely blinded to justice and reason by faith in Stalin's infallibility.

But although in Spain individual government spokesmen expressed their personal opinions about the trial in the sense indicated by Brockway, a forthright public condemnation of it, a vigorous campaign against it and against its known instigators, was not in accord with the policy of friendship with the Soviet Union dictated by the exigencies of the Civil War.

During the trial the Stalinists tried hard to ensure that the atmosphere in which it was held should approximate as closely as possible to that in which the Moscow Trials had

taken place. Writing from prison, one of the accused, Julian Gorkin, charged that:

We have just been informed that the trial has been authorized upon the insistence of Azana. The matter was discussed in the Council of Ministers and it seems that the Stalinist Minister demanded an outright condemnation. Finally he consented to the holding of the trial with the condition that it should be conducted without any fuss. And now you should see their press. Each day they flood the streets of Barcelona with handbills and publish despicable slogans and boxes in their press. The Acting Attorney-General is, without the shadow of a doubt, their faithful instrument. Behind him towers the powerful shadow of the GPU.

Petitions were circulated demanding the death penalty and it was even alleged that in certain Army divisions Stalinist officers obliged men to sign these as a matter of discipline. If this was so, it was no more than might be expected of those who in all other respects did their best to imitate the Soviet model. Altogether, no effort was spared in Barcelona in 1938 to inflame public opinion against the accused both before and during the trial. But in spite of all this massive pressure the result can hardly be acclaimed by the Stalinists as a success. The 'evidence' of espionage in the service of Franco was believed by no one. The Court was compelled to admit that the accused had all 'a well known and firmly established anti-Fascist record'. The power of the GPU was strong enough however to make such an obvious frame-up possible and to secure prison sentences for five out of seven of the accused. Julian Gorkin, Juan Andrade, Enrique Androher Pascual and Pedro Bonet Guito were each sentenced to fifteen years; Jorge Arquer Salto received eleven years; Daniel Rebull and José Escudor were acquitted. The sentenced men were found guilty, under Article 238, No. 4 of the Common Penal Code, of attempting to implant 'in Catalonia and the rest of Loyalist Spain a political and economic social order different from

the present one', and attempting to 'wrest the nation, or part of it, from the authority of the Government'.

This quotation from the Court's findings shows that the Stalinists failed in their major aim of having the POUM branded as a Franco fifth column. On the contrary the Court was compelled to recognize that the accused were Franco's mortal enemies. This fact was, and remains, extremely unpalatable for the Stalinists. They reacted to it in their characteristic manner. They not only ignored this finding of the Court, deliberately omitting whole passages in their newspaper 'reports' of the trial, but, in an effort to maintain the slander they had started, they continued to lie in the brazen manner of men for whom the lie is the most important weapon in the ideological armoury. To this day they have not ceased to propagate this lie. The unabashed open supporter of the GPU and the under-cover fellow-traveller continue, each working in his own particular sphere of operations, to perform the duties in which they excel—the slinging of mud at anyone who dares to oppose the beloved Leader.

It must be emphasized that this blackening of political opponents by the use of the lie direct or indirect is inseparable from the Stalinist method. Covered by the propaganda smoke-screen poured out by the Communist Party, the GPU disposes of its victims. The list of those done to death by the GPU or its aides in Spain is long. At the head of this list stands the name of Andreas Nin.

Nin, as has been noted, was never arrested by the Republican Government, was never an inmate of one of its jails after the May event. He was traced to the villa or hotel in Alcala de Henares, one of the many unofficial prisons maintained by the GPU in Spain, and then all trace of him was lost—until one morning his body was picked up from the gutter of a street in Madrid. Andreas Nin would never

again raise his voice in protest against the judicial murders of the Moscow Trials; would never again agitate and organize against the Stalinists aim of dictating to the Spanish workers' movement. Who had an interest in stopping his mouth? In the language of the law—*cui bono*? Who had openly called for his extermination? There can be but one answer to these questions. The error of allowing him to leave the Soviet Union alive in 1930 had been made good. The GPU, aided by the Spanish Stalinists, had assassinated him.

If there is any doubt that Nin was a victim of the GPU, consider these others who also disappeared without trace or were assassinated in Spain. Kurt Landau, Austrian refugee from Nazism, former editor of *Der Funke*—kidnapped and killed. José Robles, Professor of Spanish Literature at the Johns Hopkins University in the United States, vanished without trace. He was on holiday in Spain when the Civil War began. He offered his services as an interpreter to General Goriev, Soviet Officer-in-Command in Madrid. In the spring of 1937 the rumour was circulated in Valencia (one does not have to guess by whom) that he had been shot as a spy. But all that is definitely known is that he one day vanished and has never been seen since. Marc Rein, son of the exiled Menshevik Raphael Ambramovich, whose name figures in the 1931 Moscow frame-up trial, also disappeared without trace.*

On learning of his son's disappearance Ambramovich

* Raphael Ambramovich was alleged to have gone to the Soviet Union in 1928 in order to contact members of the so-called 'All-Union Bureau' and urge upon them the acceptance of a policy of intervention in Russia by the imperialist powers. At the time he was alleged by the prosecution to have been in Russia he was photographed outside the *Maison du Peuple* in Brussels, in company with other delegates to the International Socialist Congress in August, 1928 (see *The Moscow Trail and the Labour and Socialist International*, The Labour Party, London, n.d.).

rushed to Spain and spent a month of desperate and fruitless searching for him. But Marc Rein was never found. In his book *Men and Politics* (Jonathan Cape, London, 1947, p. 407), Louis Fischer naïvely comments: 'Nin, Rein and Robles were isolated and regretted instances of an evil war-time phenomenon that had been wiped out by the middle of 1937'. On the contrary, these were by no means isolated instances but simply the more outstanding examples among many less well-known cases of kidnapping and murder. Nor did they cease by the middle of 1937. Nor, as this book shows, were they confined to Spain, the consequence of passions aroused by civil war. What we are investigating are not at all unpremeditated crimes committed in the heat of the moment, but actions deliberately and calculatedly carried out for political ends. Fischer himself relates (*ibid.* p. 379) another instance—the disappearance of one of his own assistants. This man was a

Pole of about forty-five, named Wolf. . . . One morning he disappeared. My suspicions induced me to ask Marty* and Marty replied fiercely that he knew nothing. But later I learned the facts. In the middle of the night, three Polish comrades entered Wolf's room and instructed him to dress and come with them. . . . He was arrested for 'Trotskyism'. Marty had given the order. Four others were arrested that same night.

Secret arrests in the middle of the night, kidnappings, and summary executions, were a regular feature of Stalinist activities in Spain and only someone merely skimming the political surface could fail to understand this. The policy proclaimed by *Pravda* of exterminating political opponents was carried out in Spain under the direct orders of the GPU. The complete list of the victims of this policy will

* Leading French Stalinist active in Spain on behalf of the GPU during the Civil War. He appears in Earnest Hemingway's *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (pp. 408 *et seq.*).

perhaps never be drawn up. The fate of these persons was, with the exception of certain of the more outstanding personalities, obscured by the wholesale carnage of the Civil War; the cries of protest uttered in short-lived little bulletins with a tiny circulation, such as *Independent News*, were drowned in the thunder of explosives. Many more names of those who were killed by the GPU could be given, but in order to round off the picture it is necessary to add only one or two more cases to those already cited.

Walter Schwarz, German political refugee, a member of the German KPO (Communist Party Opposition) since 1923, joined the POUM and spent a year with its militia on the Aragon Front, where he became political commissar of the 29th (Lenin) Division. He was arrested in August, 1937, and accused, on evidence as flimsy as that brought against the POUM leaders, of being Agent No. 7 [*sic*] of the Gestapo.

On Thursday morning, May 6, 1937, the body of Camillo Berneri was found in a Barcelona gutter, where it had been flung by PSUC (*i.e.* Stalinist) guards who had torn him from his home the night before. Berneri was a refugee from Mussolini's regime, the recognized spiritual leader of Italian anarchism. He had described Stalin's policy in Spain in four words: 'It smells of Noske'.*

Margaret Buber, wife of Heinrich Neumann, leading German Communist who was arrested in Moscow in 1937 and never heard of again, tells of another case—that of an Englishman, Hamilton Gold (*Under Two Dictators*, Gollancz, 1949, p. 169).

In about 1935 this young man—he was about twenty-five then—had come to Russia with an Intourist party. He was an en-

* German 'Majority' Socialist leader; an organizer of the notorious 'Freikorps', military arm of the German counter-revolution in 1919 (see *Germany in Transition*, M. Philips Price, The Labour Publishing Co. Ltd., 1923).

thusiastic Communist and Russia was for him the land of promise. Whilst in Moscow he made the acquaintance of a Russian who suggested that he should stay in the Soviet Union and work at his job—he was a wireless mechanic. He agreed with alacrity. Then came the Spanish Civil War and the Russians sent him to Spain as a wireless technician. Towards the end of 1937 . . . Hamilton Gold was in Barcelona. Whilst there he was invited to go on board a Russian ship in the harbour to examine a new type of wireless apparatus. He went on board and was prevented from leaving. He was taken off at Odessa as a prisoner.

Hamilton Gold received a sentence of ten years' imprisonment for 'espionage'. His real crime was that while in Spain he had during the course of his work learned too many secrets.*

But for the fact that Margaret Buber managed to survive the terrors of the Nazi concentration camp to which she was handed over by the Soviet Government in 1940, the fate of Hamilton Gold would never have been revealed to the outside world. Who can say how many more similar tragedies have occurred? He is one of many from all parts of the globe who became entangled in the net. Too late he learned the extremes to which the Soviet would be driven by an almost pathological suspicion of all those, even the most subservient, the most supple-spined enthusiast of the Faith, who came over from the 'enemy camp'. If the very fact of normal friendly contact with a foreigner laid the Russian subject open to a charge of treason, how much the

* There is also the case of Walter Held, Trotskyist, refugee from Hitler, who was living in Sweden when the Nazi-Soviet war broke out. Held and his wife, fearing that the Nazis would invade Sweden, decided to try and get to the United States. The only way open to them was across Russia. They obtained the necessary visas and started off on their journey. Somewhere in Russia they were both taken off the train. Lucien Blit, Polish socialist who escaped from Russian imprisonment, informed the author that one day a man carrying two suitcases was thrust into the cell occupied by his Polish comrade, Ehrlich. This man was Walter Held. His wife had been taken off by the police to another prison. Neither of them has been heard of since.

more perilous was the situation of a passportless, friendless, obscure and uninfluential foreigner in that land!*

Russell Blackwell, an American with a long and honourable record in the labour movement, was another who attracted the attentions of the GPU. Released from their hands by the Loyalist Government through the intervention of the United States Department of State on August 1, 1938, he was seen safely on board a ship bound for home. Once aboard, however, he was again arrested by the 'secret police', *i.e.* the GPU. It has not been possible to trace him further and it may be that he was one of the lucky ones who eventually managed to get clear. But Bob Smillie, member of the British Independent Labour Party, who went to fight with the POUM militia was not one of the fortunate. He was arrested at the French frontier when on his way back to England. His papers were in order but he was nonetheless flung into jail. He died in Valencia Prison. The cause of his death was officially given out as acute appendicitis, but even if this was the immediate cause of that robust young man's death, is it unreasonable to suggest that the conditions of his imprisonment were the real basic cause? In view of the oft-repeated, openly proclaimed intentions of the Stalinists to 'exterminate Nin and his little band of friends'—among whom was Smillie—

* Consider the fate of Carola Neher, famous German actress, widow of the poet Klabund; of Zensl Mühsam, widow of the libertarian poet Erich Mühsam, who was done to death in a Nazi concentration camp; of Kaethe Schmidt, Grete Sonntag, Wally Adler; of the internationally known Herman Remmele and Heinz Neumann. All these people were more or less prominent in the German Communist movement, some of them famous names in the world labour movement; all of them took refuge in the Soviet Union when Nazism swept Germany; all of them were sentenced as 'Trotskyists' to long terms of imprisonment, which it is highly unlikely they will have survived. It was at one time reported that Carola Neher had been shot. The Soviet authorities have never either confirmed or denied this report; her fate and the fate of others is surrounded by the silence of the tomb. What hope then for the unknown and altogether friendless exile!

is it too far-fetched to assert that, if he had indeed suffered from appendicitis, they would have denied him proper medical attention? If Bob Smillie's death had been just a single isolated case, we should be the first to admit that it might have been due to bad administration of the prison, reprehensible but not necessarily criminal, that is, deliberate. But put this case into the setting of all those other political assassinations, summary executions under a thin disguise of legality, kidnappings in which the victims were never again found alive or dead, and it must be granted that it fits into the general pattern of GPU activity.

Into this pattern fits also the case of Erwin Wolf, young Czechoslovak refugee and at one time secretary to Trotsky, and that of Hans Freund (known as Moulin), another member of the Trotsky organization. Both of these men were kidnapped by the GPU in Spain and never seen again.

Thus was the 'cleaning up' process carried out in Spain 'with the same degree of energy as in the USSR'.*

It would be extremely naïve to regard the assassinations carried out by the GPU in Spain as an 'abnormality', a purely war-time phenomenon possible only in the peculiar conditions existing at that time. Civil war admittedly has the effect of cheapening the value of human life, but the history of the 'purges' in Russia leaves no room for illusions—in no circumstances has individual human life any sacredness in the eyes of the men in the Kremlin (except, of

* It was also of course necessary, in order that no stray ends should be left lying around, that the Soviet representatives in Spain (those, that is, who revealed themselves as such to the public) should also be kept quiet. 'The public figures of this period, the Ambassador Rosenberg, his second-in-command and successor Geikis, Michael Koltsov, nominally correspondent of *Pravda*, Generals Kleber and Goriev disappeared. . . .' (Max Belof, *The Foreign Policy of Soviet Russia*, Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1949, Vol. 11, p. 31.) Rosenberg was recalled in February, 1937. It was reported that he had been appointed to Tiflis, but he never turned up there. Koltsov will be remembered in connection with the Miller affair in France.

course, their own). The palpable and partially successful attempt to frame-up the POUM leaders and to achieve their 'legal' murder demonstrates the existence of a calculated plan of campaign. This plan was supplemented by the murder of Nin and of others. Failure to achieve the full objective does not alter the fact that the Barcelona trial was an attempt to reproduce the procedure of the Moscow Trials. It was indeed the first dress-rehearsal on foreign soil of the political demonstration trial later to be more successfully staged in Hungary and Bulgaria. Through *Pravda*, official organ of the Russian Communist Party, that is, the Soviet Government, that is, the police-terror apparatus of the GPU, that is—Stalin, this objective of the extermination of all 'Trotskyist and anarcho-syndicalist elements' was publicly proclaimed and systematically pursued. The circumstances of civil war unquestionably favoured the GPU work, but, as has been seen, this work also went on in the peaceful atmosphere of Switzerland. The only difference was of degree and not of essence. One would have to be blind indeed to see no connection between these activities in Spain and the fate of Koutieпов and Miller, of Navachine and Klement, of Sedov and Reiss.

A further link in this chain is provided by the strange death of Walter Krivitsky, otherwise Samuel Ginsberg, holder of the Order of the Red Flag, one-time chief of the Western European Section of the Soviet Military Intelligence.

Barnes

CHAPTER VI

WHEN IS SUICIDE MURDER?

Thelma Jackson, maid in the Hotel Bellevue, Washington, D.C., the United States of America, was going from room to room on the fifth floor, making beds and generally tidying up. It was the morning of February 10, 1941. Around nine-thirty she came to a room that was locked, and receiving no answer to her knock on the door, she opened it. She took a few paces into the room and then stopped suddenly, for it was not after all unoccupied. On the bed was sprawled the figure of a man—but the apology she was about to utter froze on her lips at the sight of the blood. She turned and fled from the room.

The man was dead. A .38-calibre bullet had been fired at contact range into his right temple. The weapon lay near his right hand and the blood that had poured from the wound had obliterated any finger-prints. The window was without a sill, fastened from within, and there was no fire-escape outside it. The door also had been locked from the inside. Three notes written in the dead man's handwriting and found on the table by the bed suggested that the writer had taken his own life.

All these facts plainly pointed to suicide. There was no apparent reason to suspect foul play. But . . .

But the dead man, registered at the hotel in the name of Walter Prokef, was in reality none other than the famous General Krivitsky, former Soviet Military Intelligence agent whose break with Stalin in October, 1937, and subsequent revelations had caused a world-wide sensation. And since he had made that decision to challenge the Kremlin he

had repeatedly stated that the GPU was out to silence him. He had warned his friends: 'If ever they try to prove that I took my own life, don't believe it'. In view of these circumstances his violent end was bound to provoke much speculation, and raise a demand for the fullest possible investigation of all the facts surrounding the case.

Walter Krivitsky was a youngster of eighteen when he joined the Bolsheviks in 1917. He gave long and faithful service to the ideals of Socialism, which he believed the Russian Revolution was realizing. In his own words:

During all the years that I served the Soviet Government I never expected anything more than the right to continue my work. I never received anything more. Long after the Soviet power had been stabilized, I was sent abroad on assignments that exposed me to the danger of death, and that twice landed me in prison. I myself, when travelling abroad, would live in moderate comfort, but did not earn enough, even as late as 1935, to keep my apartment in Moscow properly heated or to pay the price of milk for my two-year-old son. I was not in a strategic position, and I had no desire, I was too much absorbed in my work, to become one of the new privileged bureaucrats with a material stake in defending the Soviet order. I defended it because I believed it 'was leading the way to a new and better society'. (*I was Stalin's Agent*, The Right Book Club, 1940, pp. 8-9.)

He was in France when the murder of his friend Ignace Reiss was made known. Suddenly and unexpectedly summoned to return to Moscow, he had no doubt of the fate that awaited him there. He was faced with the choice between the inevitable bullet in the neck in the cellars of the Lubianka or refusing to return and taking a chance of escaping the assassins who would be sent to execute him.*

He took the chance. Believing attack to be the best means

* Alexander Barmine, one-time *Chargé d'Affaires* of the Soviet Legation in Athens, nineteen years in the service of the Soviet Government, author of *One who Survived* (New York, 1945) addressed the following appeal to the Central Committee of the League for the Defence of the Rights of Man on December 7 1937, shortly after he resigned his post and turned his back on Stalin: 'I think

of self-defence, he made public his break with the Soviet regime, threw himself on the protection of the French authorities and finally succeeded in reaching the United States with his wife and young son. By thus openly declaring his views he hoped to avoid the fate of Reiss, whose mistake, he felt, had been to try and conceal himself and not to rely upon the protection that might have been given him by a capitalist state. In return for the protection afforded him, Krivitsky, in a series of articles in the French and American press, revealed some of the secret machinations of the GPU. These revelations, however, made him an active and dangerous enemy of the Soviet Government. When his articles first appeared in print he was assailed by Communist Party spokesmen and fellow-travellers as a lying impostor who was no general of the Red Army at all, but one Samuel Smelka or Ginsberg, an Austrian living in Paris who had never in his whole life enjoyed the slightest acquaintance with the high-ranking Soviet personages of whom he wrote—or rather, of whom Isaac Don Levine ‘ghosted’ for him. (In passing, let us note that the same accusation was made in similar circumstances with regard to Kravchenko; even the same journalist being named as the author of *I Chose Freedom*). In support of this contention, the *American Daily Worker*, (December, 13, 1939) approvingly quoted the ‘anti-Soviet White Russian’ author Michael T. Florinsky, who expressed the view that Krivitsky’s book *I Was Stalin’s Agent* had been touched up in order to bring it into conformity with later political developments; that is, it differed materially from the articles which had appeared in *The Saturday Evening Post* and elsewhere. Every effort was

of my friends who are at their posts in other countries of Europe, America and Asia: each day they are threatened with a similar fate and placed in a tragic dilemma—either to return to Russia to a certain death or, abandoning hope of again seeing their country, to risk the bullets of the foreign agents of the Secret Police, agents who have just recently been following my every step.’

made to pooh-pooh Krivitsky's revelations as pure journalistic fantasies.

But when his death was announced the attitude of the Stalinists underwent a significant change; it then became a matter of a traitor who had been given his just deserts.

It was therefore inevitable that in spite of the apparently overwhelming evidence in support of the verdict that he had committed suicide, his lawyer, Louis Waldman, should immediately demand the strictest investigation.

However, Bernard Thompson, chief of the Washington detective bureau, could not do other than conclude, on the basis of the material facts, that it was a clear case of suicide. There were no finger-prints on the gun; if there had been any they had been washed off by the blood from the wound. As has been already noted, both window and door had been locked from within, and moreover there was no fire-escape by means of which an intruder might have gained entry to the room in which the body was found. It was true that someone might have been able to enter the room with a pass-key, but unless Krivitsky had been a very sound sleeper he would surely have awakened. Yet there were absolutely no signs of a struggle. Krivitsky lay on the bed with his coat and shoes off, the blood-soaked gun near his right hand, the room undisturbed. And how account then for the suicide notes, demonstrably written by Krivitsky?

The first of these letters, written in Russian, was addressed to the dead man's wife and seven-year-old son. Any suicide note is a tragic document, but here the pathos is heightened by the historic setting: this little individual tragedy was played out upon a vast stage, sombre with the brutalities of our time that overshadowed it, and yet brought it into sharp relief as the epitome of this age—the little man caught in the wheels of the machine he himself had helped to construct.

This letter ran:

Dear Tanya and Alek,

It is very difficult and I want to live very badly. But it is impossible. I love you, my only one. It is difficult to write, but think about me and you will understand that I have to go. Don't tell Alek yet where his father is going. I believe that in time you will tell him, because it will be best for him. Forgive, it is very hard to write. Take care of him and be a good mother to him and be always quiet and never get angry with him. He is very good and always very pale. Good people will help you, but not enemies. I think my sins are big. I see you, Tanya and Alek. I embrace you.

Yours,

Vella.

P.S. I wrote this yesterday on Dobertov's farm, for I did not have strength in New York. I had no business in Washington. I went to see Dobertov, because that is the only place I could get the firearms.

Krivitsky's widow refused to accept this letter as evidence of suicide. She knew him well enough to know, she declared, that he would never have written in that way of his own free will. His friends likewise were not prepared to accept it as conclusive. Had not he himself warned: 'If ever they try to prove that I took my own life, don't believe it'. It would take much more than a letter to offset the effect on them of those oft repeated words.

In this letter Krivitsky says that he 'had no business in Washington'. This seems strange because he had ostensibly gone there in order to try and speed up the granting of American citizenship, his application for which had been made some time before. He had also told friends that he was trying to move out of New York, where he felt himself in the greatest danger from the GPU, and settle in Virginia. These would seem to be adequate reasons for his trip to Washington, but he writes that he went there only in order to obtain a gun. At the same time he mentions by

name the man who apparently helped him to get the gun. There does not seem to be any logical need for this postscript. In fact, if Dobertov had indeed helped him to get a gun, there would seem to be every reason why he should not have involved him by mentioning his name in this connection.

The police established that Krivitsky had bought the gun himself and this finally clinched the matter for them. Charles Henshaw, hardware store assistant, identified the weapon found near the body as a pistol bought together with fifty soft-nosed bullets by a man giving the name of Walter Paref, of Barboursville, Virginia, and he identified the corpse as that of this Walter Paref. This evidence settled the matter so far as the official police investigation was concerned. Krivitsky had never before carried a weapon or made any attempt to secure one, in spite of his conviction that he was a marked man.

There were two other letters left by Krivitsky. To his lawyer he had written in English:

Dear Mr. Walden,

My wife and boy will need your help. Please do what you can for them—Walter Krivitsky.

P.S. I went to Virginia because I knew I could get a gun there. If my friends should have any trouble please help them, they did not know why I bought a gun.

And to a close friend, Suzanne La Follette, he wrote:

I trust that you are well. I am dying with the hope that you will help Tanya and my poor boy. You were a friend—Yours, Walter.

P.S. I also think about your brother and Dorothy.

Yet in spite of everything his friends were still unconvinced. One of them, Boris Shub, expressed the following opinion of Krivitsky's character: 'I have worked with him and I know his temperament. He was too convinced of his own importance to consider suicide. Besides, he was a

fatalist. He felt that the GPU would eventually get him. He was resigned to it'. This summed up the views on his character of those who knew him well. He was in their opinion not the suicidal type; he was on the point of becoming a naturalized American citizen; and he had no financial worries of any kind, since his writings had brought him enough to live on in comparative comfort for some years. What possible reason could there be for a man who had risked his life for so many years in the secret service of Soviet Military Intelligence to take his life at such a time. It was simply not in keeping with the calibre of a man who had joined the Bolsheviks at the age of eighteen, risked torture and death a hundred times in those early days of bloody conflict, shown all his life a fatalistic indifference to his own fate and such ability and devotion to the cause that he had been awarded the high Order of the Red Flag.

His friends continued to be haunted by those words of his that now seemed invested with a prophetic significance. 'If ever they try to prove that I took my own life, don't believe it'.

These words were more than a warning and a prophecy. They, in addition, confirmed his fatalistic acceptance of an inevitable violent end and also pointed to the method by which his death would be accomplished. Himself formerly a leading member of an international organization with its own laws above those of the countries in which it operated—not excluding Soviet Russia itself—he had no illusions about the lengths to which his former comrades were prepared to go. They would, of course, seek to conceal or disguise his death if possible. And what better concealment could there be than to make it look like suicide? He had already publicly charged that Koutieпов, Miller, Nava-chine, Reiss, Klement, Sedov, Nin, Rein, Trotsky had been done to death by the GPU. All these men, in spite of

their different political viewpoints, had had one thing in common—they had all been Stalin's enemies: as he was also. What further trick would the GPU pull out of its bag in order to cover up their work when they settled with him? It would have to be made to look like suicide, otherwise his death would be all too obviously the handiwork of his former colleagues. Krivitsky knew from experience how resourceful the GPU was in such matters.

Louis Waldman, his lawyer, disclosed that in January, 1941, Krivitsky had received warning of the appearance in New York of a man named 'Hans'. The following letter had been written to Suzanne La Follette by Paul Wohl, who had for a time collaborated with Krivitsky in writing an exposure of Stalin's secret agents abroad, and who had later fallen out with him. Wohl had written:

My dear Miss La Follette,

Will you please inform your honourable friend K., that an ominous person is in New York: Hans. This letter is addressed to you since K. hides from me. . . . His devious practices hardly justify this warning. I hesitate to send it. It might be better to let the rats devour each other.

Yours truly,

Paul Wohl.

The bitter tone of this note shows that Wohl was hostile to Krivitsky. Yet in spite of this he felt it was his duty to warn him against a danger that appeared to him to be very real. In Wohl's opinion the appearance of 'Hans' meant that the GPU net was tightening round Krivitsky.

After Krivitsky's death Waldman demanded to know:

What is 'Hans', a foreign agent, doing in the United States? How did he get in? Who are his associates? Where and how does he function? Aren't these matters for the FBI to investigate? Failure on its part to act in this case will leave the inference that anyone exposing foreign espionage in our country and giving the government information about GPU affairs does so at his own peril.

The purpose of this agent's trip from Belgium to the United States may have had no direct connection with the Krivitsky case. But this man was well known to Krivitsky as a GPU agent, a former aide of his who had once expressed doubts as to the correctness of Stalin's policy and then later had tried to persuade him to return to Moscow. In France, after Krivitsky had broken with the GPU, this man had been surprised shadowing him, and Krivitsky and his police escort had unsuccessfully given chase. That this man should now turn up in New York would naturally alarm Krivitsky. Whether his presence there did actually have any connection with the pursuit of Krivitsky remains unknown, but it is also interesting as an illustration of the ease with which GPU agents are able to move from one end of the world to the other.

In support of those who declined to accept the suicide theory, Trotsky's widow, Natalie, telegraphed the following comment from Mexico: 'Stalinists long used disguised suicides to conceal their killings.'

Bearing in mind all the circumstances of this case it is impossible to dismiss this statement as simply dictated by prejudice. One recalls the many opponents of Stalin in Russia who 'committed suicide'. Even his own wife, Alleluieva, was officially reported to have put a bullet through her brain.

But the police investigation was concerned only with the material evidence, and on this basis there was but one verdict possible. Krivitsky had taken his own life. So far as the police were concerned the case was closed.

Yet was there really no other verdict possible? His voice still rings insistently in one's ears: 'Don't believe it! Don't believe it!'

If a man takes a gun and puts it to his temple and sends a bullet through his brain—isn't that suicide?

Yes, it is suicide . . . and still—it may not be suicide.

What is the answer to this paradox?

It is not so difficult a problem after all. The simple solution was given by Krivitsky's widow. She wrote:

I am convinced that my husband was forced to write the notes he left behind. Hans was a frequent visitor to our home. He knew a great many details of our life. I see his hand in the notes my husband was forced to write. His note to me, in particular, certainly does not sound like him. Walter had utter contempt for suicide and would never have killed himself willingly. They forced him to write those notes and then they forced him to kill himself. He made a deal with them to save me and our boy.

Is that quite beyond belief? In Soviet Russia, are not the sins of the father visited upon his family? They are. It is even laid down in legal form in Paragraph 3 of the Decree of June 8, 1934:

In the event of flight or escape abroad of a military person, the adult members of his family, if they have in any way assisted the preparations or the commitments of the act of treason, or even if they have known about it without bringing it to the knowledge of the authorities, will be punished with five to ten years' imprisonment with the confiscation of their property. The other adult members of the traitor's family, living with him or being his dependants at the time of treason, are deprived of their electoral rights and deported for five years to the remote regions of Siberia.

Difficult as it may be, let the reader try for one moment to put himself in Krivitsky's position. Suppose he had been told by the GPU that unless he did as they wanted, his wife and child would be kidnapped, taken to the Soviet Union, and there. . . . Would he have laughed at such a threat? Would he have really believed them incapable of carrying it out?

Krivitsky, you are a renegade and a traitor. No one does what you have done and gets away with it. If you go unpunished your example is a threat to the entire organization. On top of that, you know too much. Right now people don't take you too seriously;

but the situation may change. We have a little proposition to make you—a compromise by which we shall both gain something. A compromise is when both sides give a little and both sides gain a little, isn't it? Give us your life and we'll give you the lives of your wife and child. That's reasonable, isn't it? More reasonable than you've a right to expect. We won't want any unnecessary bother; we could, of course, take you any time we like; but we want to do things quietly, without any fuss if possible. But one way or another we'll do it. It's up to you. You help us—and we'll help you. Otherwise—well, you know we don't make idle threats.

It may well have gone something like that.

Remember that Krivitsky and his family were still legally Soviet citizens. If the reader still thinks all this is far-fetched, let us recall the case of Madame Kasenkina. Oksana Stepanovna Kasenkina was a Russian school-teacher employed by the Soviet Embassy in New York. Ordered to return to Moscow, she took refuge with the Countess Alexandra Tolstoy, hoping to be able to stay in the United States and begin a new life. Her place of hiding was soon discovered, however, and she was forcibly removed by Soviet officials. The Soviet Consul-General, Yakov Lomakin, stated that Madame Kasenkina had returned to the Embassy of her own free will and wished to go back to the Soviet Union. Madame Kasenkina herself confirmed this in the presence of numerous newspaper reporters. A few days later (August 8, 1948) she threw herself from the third-floor window of the Russian Consulate, escaping death by a miracle, and by this act of desperation gave the lie direct to the Russian Ambassador, who with a great show of indignation had repudiated the charge that Kasenkina was being held against her will, and who declared that such action by Soviet officials was unthinkable. And this case concerned no former Soviet Military Intelligence agent of high rank, but a simple school-teacher employed to teach the children of Soviet officials. Yet the

Russian Ambassador came forward in person to cover up the kidnapping! What more striking illustration could there be of the lengths to which these men are compelled to go in order just to prevent the world from learning something of the life of the people under the Soviet regime.

If such strong measures could be taken against a relatively unimportant person like Kasenkina, how much stronger would be the measures taken against a Krivitsky! Krivitsky himself must have been fully conscious of this. The possibility that the bargain suggested was actually made between him and the GPU, not only cannot be ruled out of consideration, but is the only explanation of his strange death that squares with all the facts of his psychology, his personal position and the political considerations bearing on the case.

The Krivitsky affair did not long occupy the headlines. The impression left is that those who mould public opinion felt that, all said and done, this was not really their concern but an internal affair of the Soviet Government. Higher political considerations also served to obscure its importance. An indication of this fact is seen in the press reports during the same month in which he met his death, when it was stated that the administrative officials in the United States were growing alarmed in case the matter should lead to diplomatic complications at a time when relations with the Soviet Government were particularly delicate. It was also suggested that further unnecessary suspicion had been aroused by the fact that the police had taken no photographs of the room before moving the body and had permitted the maid to clean up without looking for fingerprints. However, when the Nazi offensive against Russia was launched in June of that year, the Krivitsky case had already been more or less forgotten.

Yet it ought not to be forgotten. It belongs to the history of our time.

CHAPTER VII

THE LADY VANISHES

In every big city in the world in the course of each year many people disappear: they leave their homes one day on business or pleasure, and do not return. Such disappearances are reported to the police by those interested. Sometimes the missing person is found; sometimes all further trace of him or her is lost for ever. It may be a case of lost memory; or of suicide, accidental death, even murder—where the corpse, if found, is too decomposed or too badly mutilated to be identifiable. Perhaps the person concerned has succeeded in beginning a new life under an assumed name in a place remote from former haunts. So every year from among the swarming millions of our ant-hill cities some few drop out of the world that knew them, vanish, are never seen again by relatives or friends. The search for them is eventually abandoned as hopeless; they remain only as names in the records, with the legend—Unable to Trace, and as memories in the minds of those near and dear to them.

There is a case of this nature that belongs to our story. One morning towards the end of May or the beginning of June, 1937—the exact date is unknown—a woman named Juliet Stuart Poyntz left her room in the Women's Association Clubhouse at 353 West 57th Street, New York City, in the USA. She did not pack a bag; she took nothing with her; her room was undisturbed, in its normal state, just as if she had gone round the corner to buy a packet of cigarettes or a newspaper. She left no note behind. She called up no friend to say that she was going away on a trip. She simply walked out of the building and never came back.

And to this day not the slightest material clue as to where she went and what became of her has been unearthed.

Although there were absolutely no material clues to account for her strange disappearance, there were other clues.

Miss Poyntz was no young girl up from the country seeking Life with a capital L, alone and unfriended in the Big City. On the contrary, she was a mature woman with a large circle of friends and a considerable standing in the Communist Party world and among those on its fringes. For close on twenty years she had been a staunch supporter of the Stalin line. A school-teacher by profession, she had a strong personality, was an able and forceful speaker, and has played a leading role in the early years of her Communist Party membership. Then in the year 1934 she suddenly ceased to be publicly associated with that Party.

But this retirement from active, open political life did not mean that she had deserted her old friends. On the contrary, those in the upper strata of Communist politics had good reason to believe that she was still serving the cause; in a quiet way, unostentatiously; but not the less effectively. Others who observed the Communist Party from the outside, knew a great deal about its methods and knew what to infer from the facts, also came to the same conclusion. For had not Juliet Poyntz been seen in Moscow in 1936—that is, two years after her ostensible withdrawal from Stalinist politics—in company with the notorious GPU agent George Mink.

So she was still associated with the Stalinists up to a year before her disappearance, if not later. And associated, not as an ordinary member of the Communist Party of the USA, but in a very particular way. She was connected in some way with the GPU.

Exactly how close was this connection? Was George Mink simply a friend, or did she share some of his darker secrets?

Carlo Tresca, the well-known American anarchist orator and publicist, openly charged that the disappearance of Juliet Poyntz was the work of the GPU. He challenged the Stalinists:

. . . I publicly charged that a Russian secret police agent made off with Miss Poyntz. She has not appeared since, nor has the Communist Party cited a single fact to cast doubt on my charge. Moreover, her attorney has belatedly conceded that my charge is not impossible. It is more than that, it is true. . . . We are on the trail of people who know important relevant facts. One is an American agent of the GPU, who, before being sent from Moscow to Barcelona, where he played a role in the murder of my dear comrade Professor Camillo Berneri, sterling anti-Fascist and anarchist philosopher and educator, spent a term in a Danish prison after being convicted as a Russian spy. His name is George Mink. He is a New York 'Party functionary'. His past is a matter of public record.

To those who had knowledge of Mink's activities, her continued association with him after she had ceased to publicly appear as a spokesman of the Communist Party, spoke volumes. In order to make this aspect of the affair clear to the reader it is here necessary to say something about Mink. His career will also be found interesting and instructive on its own account.

George Mink began his 'political' life in 1926, when he joined the Communist Party of the USA. Originally a taxi-driver in Philadelphia, he became a trade-union organizer for the Stalin-controlled Marine Workers' Union. He, of course, knew very little about ships—his opponents suggested that he did not know the bow from the stern—but he knew a good deal about the shady side of life, was not bothered with any moral scruples, and was apparently an able organizer. His rise was rapid. In 1927 he was writing confidential reports to his chief in Moscow, Lozovsky, one-time head of the now defunct Profintern

(Red International of Labour Unions), to whom Mink, incidentally, claimed relationship by marriage. As organizer of the first International Clubs of the American seaboard Mink was successful enough to earn the reward of a trip to Moscow in 1928. It must have been then that he first entered directly into the service of the Foreign Section of the GPU. From 1930 onwards he travelled widely and Hamburg, Berlin, Moscow saw him more often than New York. Jan Valtin* relates in his book (*Out of the Night*, Heinemann, 1941, pp. 276 *et seq.*) that he first met Mink in the waiting-room of Dimitrov's establishment, the Fuehrer Verlag, in Berlin, 1931. He describes him at that time as a short, strongly-built, dapper young man, with a small cruel mouth, greenish-brown eyes and irregular teeth. Valtin tells how, as a result of the unmasking of three GPU couriers early in 1932 (these men were stewards on the Hamburg-America liner *Milwaukee*) the member of the Hamburg *apparat* who was responsible for the safe passage of the espionage material discovered on the couriers resigned from the Communist Party. His resignation was not accepted; he knew too much. Instead he was asked to go to the Soviet Union. He refused. On May 22 this man, Hans Wissenger by name, was found shot dead in his apartment in the Muehlenstrasse.

Valtin names George Mink and a certain Hugo Marx as among those assigned to the job of dealing with Wissenger. But no one was ever apprehended for this crime.

On one occasion, however, Mink was arrested, charged and sentenced. This was in 1935 in Copenhagen, where he was tried together with another American, Nicholas Sherman, and condemned to eighteen months' imprisonment

* Originally of German nationality, his real name was Herman Krebs. He died of pneumonia on January 1, 1951, aged 45.

for espionage on behalf of a foreign power (*New York Times*, July 31, 1935). After serving his sentence Mink returned to Moscow, from where he was sent to Barcelona; the presence in Spain during the Civil War of such agents as Mink obviously was one of the major reasons for the Soviet confidence described in another chapter. Under the name of Alfred Herz he was at that time publicly charged by the anarchists as the organizer of the murder of Camillo Berneri and his friend Barbieri. Having successfully fulfilled his mission in Spain, he is next reported, some time in April, 1938, as on his way to Mexico. He was suspected of also playing a leading role in organizing the assassination of Trotsky, but if he was in Mexico at the time he managed to keep completely under cover.

This, then, was the sinister figure mentioned by Tresca in connection with the disappearance of Poyntz; this was the kind of man with whom she had been seen in Moscow. Small wonder that she herself should have been regarded as one who knew some of the secrets of GPU activities abroad, that she was herself caught up in the net.

Louis Francis Budenz, up to 1945 a leading member of the Central Committee of the United States Communist Party, says in his book (*This Is My Story*, McGraw-Hill Book Co. Inc., New York, 1947, p. 263) that he was informed by a member of the Political Committee that Poyntz had been liquidated by the GPU. Benjamin Gitlow, another former leading US Communist and one-time Executive Committee member of the Comintern, asserts more precisely that she was lured into a car in Central Park, driven north, and murdered. Her body, he alleges, was buried in woods near the Roosevelt estate in Dutchess county. Gitlow also characterizes Poyntz as 'a disillusioned GPU agent' (see *I Confess*, Dutton & Co. Inc., N.Y., 1940).

Whatever the true facts of her ultimate fate, there is

every indication that she was in some way or another mixed up with the Foreign Section of the GPU. In particular it was whispered that her disappearance was connected with the equally mysterious Robinson-Reubens affair.

At the beginning of December, 1937, a man, ostensibly an American citizen, registered at the National Hotel under the name of Robinson was reported by his wife as missing. The Soviet authorities told her at first that he had been taken to hospital. But someone had made a mistake somewhere and they did not know which hospital. And then Mrs. Robinson herself disappeared. Since these two people were travelling on American passports and were therefore presumably bona-fide American citizens, the US authorities made enquiries about them. The Soviet authorities then denied all knowledge of their whereabouts. But about six weeks afterwards a statement was issued to the effect that the Robinsons had been arrested for espionage. It seemed that both their passports were false. The 'Robinsons' were in fact Adolph Arnold and Ruth Maria Reubens, normally resident in the US, and well known as Communist Party supporters. The Soviet authorities, however, must have known about these passports long before the Reubens sailed for the USSR. For they had been obtained with the connivance of persons well-established as 'fellow-travellers'. A Fifth Avenue photographer named Ossip Garber was arrested in the US at the end of March, 1938, and charged with being a member of a conspiratorial ring which aided in obtaining these passports made out to Mr. and Mrs. Donald Robinson. Garber's status as a 'fellow-traveller' was well known in political circles. These passports were delivered, in accordance with the request of the applicants, to an organization called the Drama Travel League, and they were signed for by a Miss Helen Ravitch, who was the manageress of this set-up. Miss Ravitch, it transpired, was

the wife of Dr. S. Bernstein, who happened to be the doctor who attended, as occasion required, on none other than William Z. Foster, the man who ousted Earl Browder from leadership of the United States Communist Party in 1945. Together with Garber, Arthur Sharfin, member of Section 15 of the Bronx District of the Communist Party was indicted by a Federal Grand Jury for this and other passport frauds.

After two months' detention in Moscow, Mrs. Reubens was at last seen by representatives of the United States Embassy. The interview took place, however, in the presence of GPU men. Mrs. Reubens told the US Officials that she did not desire any assistance from them. The GPU men present would not allow any questions relating to the circumstances of her arrest or to the past activities of herself or her husband. Mr. Reubens, who it appears could not lay claim to American citizenship, was not seen, either at that time or subsequently. It is still not known what became of him. Mrs. Reubens was eventually released, but, although she was an American citizen, she was not allowed, or perhaps she did not wish, to leave the USSR.

The truth about the Robinson-Reubens' case has never been discovered. But all the available facts show this man and woman to have been closely connected with the Communist Party; all their relatives were in fact under the impression that they were members. Mr. Reubens had no known occupation but appeared to be always well in funds. The false passports were obtained for the couple by people established as linked directly or indirectly with the United States Communist Party. It is therefore clear that they went to the USSR on false passports with the full knowledge and agreement of the GPU. It is possible that an espionage trial in Moscow, aimed against America, was contemplated. Some months before the couple were arrested

there appeared press reports that the Soviet authorities were checking all tourists' ships from the US for the purpose of barring from entry into the Soviet Union of all persons by the name of Robinson. If such a trial was contemplated the subsequent exposure in the USA of the manner in which the passports were obtained obviously prevented the Soviet authorities from staging it. But whatever the exact details behind this event, the fact remains that the Reubens were victims of the 'clean-up' carried out by the GPU on an international scale.

Carlo Tresca, who claimed with others that the Reubens' case was connected with Poyntz's disappearance, was himself to come to a violent end. In the dim-out of 1943, on the corner of Fifth Avenue and 15th Street, he was struck down and killed by 'a person or persons unknown'. The former top-ranking United States Communist Gitlow, whose assertions regarding Poyntz's fate have already been cited, says that 'there was open talk in Communist circles that Tresca would pay with his life for his treachery'. Vittorio Vidali, who was active in Spain under the name of Kontrallas and who is now leader of the Communist forces in Trieste, was held and questioned by the police about this murder but released for lack of evidence. It can hardly be doubted that Tresca's assassination was a political act, but there seems little likelihood that the man or men directly responsible will ever be brought to book, although as late as January, 1949, the Tresca Memorial Committee in New York, of which Norman Thomas is Chairman, was still appealing for any information, however fragmentary, that might lead to a solution of the crime.

The disappearance of Juliet Stuart Poyntz, the Reubens' affair, and the assassination of Tresca may or may not have been directly connected one with another. In Tresca's case we may wonder at the fact that once again an outspoken

opponent of Stalin comes to a violent end, but we may admit the possibility, mooted in some quarters, that he met his death at the hands of Fascist extremists. It must be borne in mind that the Italian Fascists had a strong antipathy to Tresca, who was an outspoken and influential opponent of Mussolini. The known facts in the Reubens' case permit the strong suspicion that these two were GPU agents suspected for some reason of disloyalty to their masters. And the same applies to Poyntz. Whether the cases had any *direct* connection with one another remains an open question. But the Poyntz' case has a special bearing upon another matter—the Soviet espionage system.

In its maintenance of a Military Intelligence Service in all parts of the world the Soviet Union is not unique among the nations. But the Soviet organization for the collection of all information relevant to military matters—and how wide is the scope of such material!—has a peculiarity that fundamentally distinguishes it from the corresponding services of all other countries. Testifying before the Dies Committee on October 11, 1939, the late Walter Krivitsky asserted:

Soviet Military Intelligence has approximately the same functions as the same services of other countries. Its most unique feature is that it can enlist and recruit members of the Communist Parties in countries in which it operates. The leaders of the Communist Party in every country consider it their duty to aid Soviet Military Intelligence in their work.

Although at the time this statement was made it appeared to many to be highly exaggerated, today no unbiassed observer, however sceptical he may once have been, can question its truth. The Report of the Royal Commission set up by the Canadian Government to investigate Communist espionage activities in that country proved Krivitsky's charges to the hilt. What particularly concerns us in

this connection is, firstly, the way in which members of a Communist Party are drawn into this espionage network, often without their being really conscious of the role they are induced to play, by professional agents who either belong to the Party leadership or act through it with conscious aid; and, secondly, the fact that in the eyes of the Soviet authorities the Communist Party in every country is regarded as no more or less than an appendage of the Russian state apparatus. In this report is to be found irrefutable evidence confirming the accusations made by such former top-ranking Communists as Ruth Fischer, Gitlow, Budenz, Krivitsky, Valtin, etc., that the functions of the GPU include 'checking and reporting to the Russians on members of the Communist Party' (see Report of the Royal Commission, Ottawa, 1947, p. 24). This checking and reporting is, of course, not done simply for the purpose of being able to select, train and instruct those likely to make good spies. The broader political activities of the Party, especially its activities ostensibly on behalf of the workers' economic demands in any given industry, and especially its capacity to foster strikes calculated to serve the interests of Russian foreign policy at any given time—this side of the matter must not be overlooked. And a profound knowledge of the individual members of the organization is invaluable when it comes to a question of whom to favour for promotion in the hierarchy; whom to select as delegate to this or that body; whom to promote as candidate for an official position in this or that trade union or co-operative, and so on. On the surface this is left to the national leaderships, but the close surveillance of this leadership by the centre in Moscow, the fact that in the final analysis it is appointed by Moscow, usually ensures selection in accordance with the wishes of Moscow. And if errors do occur, they are very soon rectified.

The testimony of Igor Gouzenko fully bears out this assertion that Communist Party activities throughout the world are directed and controlled by the Soviet Government. Ostensibly a 'civilian employee' of the Soviet Embassy in Ottawa, Gouzenko was in fact a cypher clerk on the staff of the Military Attaché, Colonel Zabotin, who in turn was in reality chief of the Soviet Military Intelligence Service in Canada. Gouzenko deserted his post and revealed some of the secrets of this Service to the Canadian authorities. Testifying before the above-mentioned Royal Commission, Gouzenko stated that he had reason to believe that Goussarov, who held the official position of Second Secretary to the Soviet Embassy and had at one time been assistant to Malenkov, head of the Foreign Section of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union,

. . . had the task of transmitting political directives from his superiors in Moscow to the leaders of the Canadian Communist movement. These directives would include not only general political lines to be taken up in Communist propaganda, but also instructions on techniques of operation. Examples of the latter would be instructions to create or to get control of functional organization such as the Canadian Association of Scientific Workers; to occupy important positions in labour unions; when necessary for special purposes, to instruct certain Canadian secret Communists to take up temporarily an anti-Communist line; to get members into controlling positions in the executive of the youth movements, international friendship councils, etc., which would be important from a propaganda point of view (op. cit. p. 28).

The Commission commented on this aspect of the matter:

We must report that we have no corroboration, in any of the Russian documents placed before us, for this part of Gouzenko's testimony. . . .

At first sight we would find it difficult to credit that the leaders

of any Canadian political party would take instructions, regarding the political activities which they directed, from agents of a foreign power. However, it would be still more difficult for us to believe that men such as Sam Carr and Fred Rose, who have been shown to have acted for years as key members of an espionage network headed by agents of a foreign power and directed against Canada, would not also be prepared to accept, from agents of that same power, political instructions regarding the organization which they direct.

(Note: Sam Carr was Organizing Secretary for the Canadian Communist Party; Fred Rose was a member of the Canadian Parliament.)

If any additional proof is needed of the complete subservience of the Communist Parties to the dictates of the Russian Government, it is sufficient to point to the complete right-about-turn made when Russia was attacked by Germany. This one-hundred-and-eighty degree change in policy was made without the calling of any conferences for discussion by the membership; the order was simply issued from headquarters and those who disagreed were expelled. Thus the national leadership acts towards its rank-and-file in exactly the same way in which Moscow acts towards it.

The time has long passed when such arbitrary reversals of policy could arouse any opposition from the rank-and-file, who have learned to take orders like good soldiers. My party right or wrong is, of course, no special coinage of the Communists alone, but they have made it an unwritten principle held to with greater consistency and steadfastness than any other political body, perhaps with the exception of the totalitarian parties of Germany, Italy and Japan. This unquestioning obedience is indispensable to the role now played by these parties as outposts of the Soviet Government in enemy territory, and makes possible the use of their members, as the above-mentioned Commission revealed in some detail, for espionage. And espionage on behalf of the

Soviet Government constitutes not the least important part of the activities of these parties in all countries.

The close interweaving of the apparently normal activities of a political organization with undercover work on behalf of a foreign power makes it impossible to draw a line between them. Political directives issued from the Kremlin have only one object—that of strengthening the Soviet Union in relation to the other World Powers. Under the pretence of requiring information in order to be able to formulate policy correctly, the Communist leadership in every country outside Russia's sphere of influence demands information from those of its members who are strategically placed to obtain it—those, that is, who work in government offices, scientific institutions, arms factories and so forth. The cross-examination of one of the Canadian Stalinists implicated in the spy-ring exposed by Gouzenko throws light on the manner in which this information is gleaned. Asked if Fred Rose was the first to suggest that she could contribute to the promotion of the Soviet Government's interest by passing on information she gained in the course of her work in the High Commissioner's office, this person replied: 'He didn't say "Soviet Government"'. He said the Canadian Communist Party.' And she went on to explain that Rose told her 'the Party would be very glad to have some information in order that their policy could be formulated' (op. cit. p. 229).

The minor figures involved in this particular spy centre were all more or less the dupes of the leadership, who alone appear to have been consciously acting on behalf of the Soviet Intelligence Service. It is quite certain that nearly all, if not all, of these dupes were motivated by a vaguely conceived ideal; they felt they were working for a 'cause'; they seemed in no way to have appreciated that they were being used in the deadly game of power politics. On the

other hand, they did not show up well under cross-examination and the fact that some of them even received payment for the information they handed over, gave emphasis to their lack of principle.

No better exposure of the true role of the Communist Parties could be asked for than the fact that both Rose and Carr appeared before the public as the standard-bearers of the Canadian Party while they were all the time secretly acting as agents employed in the Soviet espionage network. Similar examples of this double role can be seen in the cases of Glading and Springhall in England; both of these men were prominent members of the Communist Party at the time they were sentenced to terms of imprisonment for espionage. When arrested, Springhall was the London District Organizer of the Party. A similar state of affairs undoubtedly exists in all countries.

We are now in a position to appreciate better the mystery of Juliet Poyntz. Here is a woman recognized by all her associates as an outstanding personality; a woman who, if not brilliant, had at least considerable talent; one who was ambitious, who wanted to cut a figure in the Party. For nearly twenty years she is faithful. In 1934 she drops active politics but is known to remain intimately associated with the notorious GPU agent—she is even seen with him in Moscow. Then there are rumours that she is beginning to doubt. Then—the lady vanishes.

CHAPTER VIII

MURDER IN MEXICO

Late one afternoon in June, 1940, a number of cars left police headquarters in Mexico City and set off in the direction of the Desert of the Lions. About thirteen miles from the city, near the village of Santa Rosa, the party came to a halt. Fifteen hundred yards or so off the roadway lay the object of their journey, a small brick-built house with white-washed walls. Dusk was falling as the group of police officers made towards the isolated dwelling, behind which thick-foliaged trees rose, accentuating its air of desolation and gloom under the rain-heavy sky.

The house was deserted but still furnished in a rough and ready manner. In one of the rooms painting materials were ranged on a table. On an easel stood an untouched canvas— whoever had placed it there had evidently found no inspiration in his surroundings. In one corner was a number of .22-calibre cartridges and a rolled-up mattress, one end of which had been slashed and cut as though with a sharp knife or razor. In another room stood a camp bed, also cut at the head. A white powdery substance had been scattered on one part of the floor and everywhere it was littered with the butt-ends of American cigarettes.

This evidence confirmed the information given to the police. The men they were seeking had at one time occupied this house. But it brought them no nearer to a solution of the disappearance of the American they were anxious to question, and who was undoubtedly either a key member of the gang or a key witness against it. Had this man been held prisoner here, or had he remained of his own free will?

The police were about to leave when one of them noticed that the floor of the kitchen had been disturbed at one spot. They had not come prepared for this. . . . But it was a possibility that could not be overlooked. The aid of a worker from the nearby village was called in. Night was falling as he carefully excavated the soil with his mattock and as there was no lighting the police shone their pocket torches on the spot. Each man knew in his heart that this was the hasty grave of a murdered man.

Not far below the surface they came upon the lime-covered corpse. The lime had helped to preserve the body and had bleached the face, which, although peaceful and unconvulsed, gleamed horrible and unearthly in the torchlight. Outside, a torrential rain began to fall, and its fierce drumming and hissing added to the silence within as they stood for a moment looking at the murdered man and crossing themselves.

They need search no more for the American. Accomplice or victim, he could no longer accuse, confess or deny. But this dead man told a tale.

At four o'clock on the morning of May 24, 1940, a gang of heavily-armed men attacked the strongly-guarded home of Leon Trotsky, last surviving representative of the Bolshevik 'Old Guard', who was then living in exile in Coyocan, a suburb of Mexico City.

This was no spontaneous action, but had evidently been prepared long beforehand. First the guard outside the twenty-foot high walls surrounding the villa had to be overpowered and disarmed; then an entry to the patio effected and the internal guards held off from interference by some of the gang while others proceeded directly to the room in which Trotsky was sleeping to assassinate him; finally the assailants had to make a rapid retreat and go to safe

cover. Speed was essential to the success of the attack. The manner in which the entire operation was carried out showed that it had been planned down to the last detail; that the attackers possessed considerable technical resources; were men with military experience, and had inside information as to lay-out of the miniature fortress and its defences.

A simple stratagem deceived the external Mexican police guard. Two men dressed as policemen, together with another in the uniform of an army lieutenant, approached the guard point while the rest waited in the surrounding darkness. In this way the attackers were able to come close to the guard without arousing suspicion and being challenged. Once within striking distance the fake policemen drew their revolvers and the 'lieutenant' rapped out: 'Hands up, you sons of bitches!'

The guards were quickly disarmed and tied up. The next problem was to gain entry to the house. The gang had come equipped with an electric saw and a rope scaling-ladder but neither was needed. The gates were opened from within and the attackers stormed through. Leaving some of their number to hold off interference of the internal bodyguard by machine-gun fire, the remainder rushed directly to the room in which Trotsky and his wife were sleeping. Through the doors and windows of the bedroom they poured a hail of machine-gun bullets across and into the beds. Throwing incendiary bombs into the study where lay Trotsky's unfinished biography of Stalin, the gang then retreated rapidly and in good order, taking with them the two cars belonging to the household in order to prevent pursuit. And with them went, or was forcibly taken, Robert Sheldon Harte, one of Trotsky's bodyguard, and the man on duty at the gates that morning.

It was Harte's body that the police had discovered in the house near the village of Santa Rosa.

The attackers, however, failed in their objective. Both Trotsky and his wife were miraculously unharmed. They had awakened at the first sound of shooting in the patio and had flung themselves on the floor. The bullets had swept over and around them, stabbing into the mattresses and walls but hitting neither of them. Only their little grandson, asleep in an adjoining room, had been slightly wounded in the foot by a splinter of flying glass or a ricocheting bullet.

General Sanchez Salazar, then Chief of the Mexican Police, could not at first believe the charge immediately made by Trotsky that this was the work of his political enemies, organized and directed by the GPU. He had no previous knowledge or experience of the GPU. The ease with which the gang had gained entry and the smoothness of the entire operation appeared to him suspicious. Moreover it did not seem possible that Trotsky and his wife could have come through such a ferocious attack unscathed. Again, he could not understand how Trotsky himself, and his entourage, could appear so calm and unruffled after such an experience. He jumped to the conclusion that this was an 'inside job', that is, he believed, fantastic as it may sound, that Trotsky himself had organized the attack in order to discredit those whose campaign of calumny had, with the signing of the Stalin-Hitler Pact, been conducted with mounting intensity month after month. Trotsky felt his right of asylum threatened by this campaign of slander and vilification and had therefore adopted this drastic way of exposing his enemies. Absurd as it sounds, this theory was not Salazar's alone; it was publicized by Stalinist or Stalinist-controlled Mexican newspapers, either openly or in a concealed form. Salazar himself, it hardly need be said, did not reach this first opinion of his on the basis of political considerations; it was rather precisely because he

had little or no understanding of the political struggle of which the attack was an expression that he could entertain the idea of 'self-assault' on the basis of such flimsy evidence as the Trotsky household's composure and so forth. Salazar had no conception of the true magnitude and the vast ramifications of the international gang, one aspect of whose activities he was called upon to unravel. Acting upon the theory of 'self-assault' he arrested two of Trotsky's bodyguard on suspicion, thereby evoking from Trotsky, in an open letter to the press, the following sharp protest.

If I took all those precautions, it is because I expected an attentat on the part of the GPU. Now that this attentat is a *fait accompli*, my friends and defenders are arrested, my friends of yesterday are suspected, but not my real enemies, well known to all the world.*

In this letter he points out that the classic rule of the GPU is—'kill an enemy and lay the blame on others.' The eagerness with which the Communist press, open and covert, seized upon the theory of 'self-assault' in the days immediately following the attack, demonstrated once again the role of the Communist Party and its fellow-travellers as the aiders and abettors of the GPU. Indeed, it is probable that the very idea of 'self-assault' would not have arisen but for the 'inspiration' of the Communists. In any case, both *El Popular* and *El Nacional*, 'left' newspapers of notoriously anti-Trotsky views, carried in their issues of May 27 identical stories calculated to advance this theory. The arrest of Trotsky's two secretary-guards was regarded by Trotsky as the result of this campaign; in his view the 'self-assault' theory was artificially inspired by the Stalinists

* This is a reference to Diego de Riviera, the painter of revolutionary subjects. At one time a supporter of Trotsky, he was then a follower of General Almazan, whose name was regarded by the labour movement in general as synonymous with reaction. Riviera has recently been reported as having unsuccessfully applied to return to the Communist Party.

with the object of diverting the police investigation on to a false trail. If the official Communist paper *La Voz de Mexico* and the other papers, influenced by the Communists, had not conducted this campaign in favour of the manifestly absurd 'self-assault' theory, then the police could hardly have taken it seriously. But with this 'popular' support behind them they felt justified in proceeding to action. But while the police may be excused on the ground of their lack of political understanding, the same cannot be said for the controllers of these newspapers. The aim of this campaign was clearly to lay a false trail; to draw the investigation away from the real perpetrators of the crime, whose connection with the Communist Party of Mexico must have been known to leading personalities of that Party. Trotsky demanded:

What aim could I pursue in venturing on so monstrous, repugnant and dangerous an enterprise? No one has explained it to this day. It is hinted that I wanted to blacken Stalin and his GPU. But would this assault add anything at all to the reputation of a man who has destroyed an entire old generation of the Bolshevik party? It is said that I want to prove the existence of a 'Fifth Column'. Why? What for? Besides, GPU agents are quite sufficient for the perpetration of an assault, there is no need of the mysterious Fifth Column. It is said that I wanted to create difficulties for the Mexican Government. What possible motives could I have for creating difficulties for the only government that has been hospitable to me? It is said that I wanted to provoke a war between the United States and Mexico. But this explanation completely belongs to the domain of delirium. In order to provoke such a war it would have been in any case much more expedient to have organized an assault on an American ambassador or on oil magnates and not on a revolutionist-Bolshevik, alien and hateful to imperialist circles. . . .

But even if one were to allow the impossible . . . there still remains the following questions: Where and how did I obtain twenty executors? How did I supply them with police uniforms? How did I arm them? How did I equip them with all the

necessary things, etc., etc. In other words, just how did a man, who lives almost completely isolated from the outside world, contrive to fulfil an enterprise conceivable only for a powerful apparatus? Let me confess that I feel awkward in subjecting to criticism an idea that is beneath all criticism.

The response to Trotsky's protest against the arrest of his secretary-guards was rapid. Through General Nunez, the President of the Republic ordered Salazar immediately to release them. That Salazar had been influenced in his action by the Stalinist press is indicated by his admission, after receiving the President's order, that 'far from aiding me in my task, the press, with its sensational articles, its news and its deductions, has only succeeded in complicating it!'

In the meanwhile, valuable time had been lost. Now aware that the solution to the affair was not so simple as he had imagined, acutely conscious of the limelight into which this historic event had thrust him, and anxious to make good his initial errors, Salazar nevertheless found himself at a dead end. There appeared to be not the slightest clue as to the identity of the attackers or to the mystery of Robert Sheldon Harte's disappearance. However, his reputation, perhaps even his career, was at stake, and he devoted all his energies and undoubted detective skill to a solution of the problem.

Luck favoured him. He had almost given up hope of finding a trail when, by pure chance, he overheard a criticism of the police made by a tipsy man in a bar. The man alleged that the police were preparing to hush up the whole business and that he himself had heard a certain police official declare in his cups that he had loaned the two police uniforms used in the attack.

It may appear surprising that the complicity of such a police official, apparently so liable to give himself away when drinking, had not sooner come to the ears of the

Police Chief. But let that pass. At any rate, here is evidence that the Communists had their contacts among the police, a fact which is perhaps not without a bearing on their general readiness to accept the 'self-assault' theory. When the final results of the investigation, and the extent of the juridical action taken against the chief criminal, are known to the reader, he will realize that Communist influence in Mexico at that time went far beyond a few individual members of the police force.

Here, then, was the clue for which General Salazar had been searching. From this point on he was able to uncover one by one nearly all the principal participants in the crime. And all of them had more or less close connections with the Mexican Communist Party.

Marteo Martinez, member of that Party, had procured the uniforms at the request of David Serrano Andonegui, a Central Committee member and at one time commandant in the Spanish Civil War. Another of those who took part in the assault, Nestor Sanchez Hernandez, ex-captain of the Stalinist 'International Brigade' in the Spanish Civil War, denied membership of the Communist Party, stating that he joined in the plot only out of friendship for David Alfaro Siqueiros, the 'organizer and principal leader'. Siqueiros had been a member of the Communist Party from 1922 to 1929 and on its Central Committee for six years of this time. In 1929 he had been expelled for 'disciplinary reasons and for differences of procedure' but continued to be, in his own words, 'a sympathizer of confidence, as a man incapable of following a fundamentally contrary political line' and had consequently, he asserted, been permitted to take part in 'many of its private or public meetings'. This Siqueiros was beyond question the recognized leader of the gang. It was he who had paid Ana Chavez Lopez and Julia Barradas Hernandez, two women members

of the Communist Party, to spy on all movements into and out of Trotsky's home, and also to try and seduce members of the police guard. It was Siqueiros' car, a large La Salle, in which the machine guns, revolvers, ammunition and bombs were transported to the scene of the attack. He it was who collected the gang together, laid down the plan of operation and gave the orders. His wife and her two brothers also took part in the affair.

David Alfaro Siqueiros became an adherent of revolutionary doctrines and an ardent supporter of the Russian Revolution at an early age. By profession a painter, he belonged to what Marxists call the *petit-bourgeoisie*. Throughout all the shifts and changes of Russian policy Siqueiros, as his above-quoted statement shows, remained a staunch follower of the 'line', swallowing hook, line and sinker, everything and anything broadcast to the faithful by the Kremlin. It does not appear that he had any particular gifts as a politician and it is therefore possible that he was an honest supporter of revolution and reform, sincerely confident that he was supporting the aspirations of the Mexican people for freedom and economic betterment. Whatever his motives, however, the fact remains that he became a hide-bound fanatic of the Stalin faith. What the psychological motive was that caused him to turn to political assassination—whether an over-developed perverted exhibitionism, a desire to compensate for the mediocrity of his artistic talent—does not lie within our competence. The fact remains that he carried out the work of the GPU, for which the whole of his previous training, including his period of service in the International Brigade where he quite possibly took part in the 'liquidation' of political opponents, had prepared him.

After the second and successful attempt upon the life of Trotsky, the Central Committee of the Mexican

Communist Party issued the following statement in its official organ, *La Voz de Mexico*:

If investigations prove that one or more members or sympathizers of the Communist Party intervened in the preparation of execution of the attacks against Leon Trotsky, violating our fundamental principles, they will be expelled from the party as elements very dangerous to the working class.

It must have already been known to the authors of this statement at the time of its drafting and publication that the investigation had already proved that the assailants were either members or closely connected sympathizers of their party. Naturally they would repudiate the actions of these people. But one would have to be naïve indeed—after reading the tale unfolded in our previous chapter—to believe that the Stalinists are guided by any ‘fundamental principles’. In this instance the plainly revealed link between the gang and the Mexican Communist Party cannot have been accidental; and the above-quoted statement merely serves as additional evidence against that party. In view of the extremes of incitement against Trotsky to which the Communist press had gone, this statement cannot even absolve them from the least heinous charge of moral responsibility. The denial that individual terrorism forms part of Communist Party methods and policy appears in the light of all the known facts as the very acme of hypocrisy.

The fact that some of the participants in the assault on Trotsky’s home had ceased to be members of the Communist Party ought to deceive no one. After the May 24 attempt on his life Trotsky wrote some revealing paragraphs on the subject of expulsions from the Communist Party which, coming from a man of his intimate knowledge of the subject, are worth quoting at some length.

Among the many possible participants in the assault, those who

are well acquainted with the internal life of the Communist Party have mentioned an individual who was in his day expelled from the Party, and was later, in return for some kind of services, re-instated. The question of the category of the 'expelled' is generally of great interest from the standpoint of investigating the criminal methods of the GPU. In the first period of the struggle against the opposition in the USSR, Stalin's clique used to intentionally expel from the party the least stable oppositionists, placing them in extremely difficult material circumstances and thus giving the GPU the opportunity for recruiting among them agents for work among the opposition. Later on this method was perfected and extended to all the parties of the Third International.

The expelled may be divided into two categories; some leave the party because of principled differences and turn their backs to the Kremlin and seek new roads. Others are expelled for careless handling of funds or other actual or alleged crimes of a moral nature. The majority of the expelled in this second category have become closely attached to the party apparatus, are incapable of any other work, and have grown too accustomed to a privileged position. The expelled of this type constitute valuable material for the GPU which transforms them into obedient tools for the most dangerous and criminal undertakings.

The leader of the Mexican Communist Party for many years, Laborde, was recently expelled on the most monstrous charges. . . . The most astonishing thing, however, is that despite the extremely opprobrious nature of the charges, Laborde did not attempt even to justify himself. He showed thereby that the expulsion was necessary for some mysterious aims which he, Laborde, dared not oppose. Still more, he utilized the first opportunity in order to declare in the press his immutable loyalty to the party even after his expulsion. Simultaneously with him a number of others were expelled who follow the self-same tactic. These people are capable of anything. They will carry out any order, perpetrate any crime, so as not to lose favour with the party. It is even possible that some of them were expelled in order to remove beforehand from the party any responsibility for their participation in the assault that was being prepared. The instructions whom to expel and under what pretext come in such cases from the most trusted representatives of the GPU who hide behind the scenes. (From *Stalin Seeks My Death*; Fourth International, August, 1941, pp. 206-7.)

Of course, Trotsky had an axe to grind. But he knew what he was talking about here.

It is perhaps not sufficiently taken into account that long years of service in the Communist Party apparatus not only nearly always render a man or woman incapable of any other work, but, even if he or she should be so capable, make it extremely difficult if not impossible to obtain. Certain exceptional circumstances may make a break with this machine possible, but in general, and particularly for minor functionaries, it is far more difficult for a 'professional' Stalinist to make a new career than it is for an old lag to go straight.

So one by one the political criminals were ferreted from their hide-outs. Meantime, the mystery of Harte's disappearance remained unsolved. Was he a traitor to Trotsky? Had he now himself gone to earth with the other undiscovered members of the gang? Or had he, like the police guards, been deceived into thinking that the attackers were friends?

A police guard affirmed that he had seen Harte go off with the band 'of his own free will'. Siqueiros had boasted on the way to the attack that he had bought someone inside Trotsky's fortress-home and that they would have no difficulty in getting in. Was it Harte? But he came from a wealthy family and had no lack of means. He had arrived in Mexico by air on April 7 of that year to take up duties as one of the exile's secretary-bodyguards. He had been strongly recommended by the organization in New York. Yet on learning of his disappearance his father, Jesse Sheldon Harte, was said to have stated that he had always regarded his son as a supporter of Stalin. Later, however, on Trotsky's demand for confirmation of this statement, he denied having made it, although the Mexican police claimed to have a signed copy of this statement. Yet Harte's

father, believing his son in the hands of the Stalinist assassins and fearing for his safety, may have made this declaration of his son's loyalty to Stalin in order to save him. Or he may simply have been mistaken in his judgement of his son's political views. On the other hand, why did he open the gates to the attackers if he was not in league with them? As the sergeant in charge of the police guard pointed out, these gates were not opened 'even to the police guard'. Yet here, too, there was a possible explanation. Suppose one of the attackers had been known to Harte as a friend. Suppose such a man, pretending to have come with an urgent message of impending danger to Trotsky, had demanded admittance while the rest of the gang kept in the background . . .? But in that case why should Harte have gone with the retreating gang of his own free will?—that is, if the statement of the police guard can be accepted.

A sharp division of opinion naturally arose over the question of Harte's role in the affair, but Trotsky and his associates refused resolutely to entertain the slightest thought that he could have betrayed them. And they took the discovery of Harte's body in the hide-out used by the attackers as conclusive proof that their faith was justified. Trotsky was a hard man; in the political struggle he waged all his adult life he neither asked for nor gave quarter. He would not have spared Harte had the evidence convinced him of his guilt.

It was one of the arrested Stalinists who told the police of the hide-out near Santa Rosa. The house had been rented by Siqueiros and it was he who had taken the painting materials and the camp bed there, which had been brought to Mexico City by his wife Angelica Arenal. Besides Siqueiros, there had been present in the house, according to the informant, his two brothers-in-law, Luis and Leopoldo

Arenal, a painter colleague Antonio Pujol and other members of the gang. At eight o'clock on the morning of May 24, the day of the attack, Luis Arenal came to the house accompanied by a tall, red-haired American who had spoken Spanish badly. This had undoubtedly been Harte.

Two bullet holes in the right side of the head showed how Harte had met his death. The cut bed and mattress indicated that he had been shot while sleeping.

Who had placed the gun to his head and pulled the trigger—twice, just to make sure? Suspicion pointed to the two brothers Leopoldo and Luis Arenal, believed to have been the last in Harte's company. Both these men had disappeared from the soil of Mexico shortly after the attack. Luis had been reported in New York, where he visited a political journalist before the fact of his involvement in the attack became known. It is known that he fled from there to the USSR, whither his wife and children later followed him. The choice of refuge speaks volumes. No trace of the other brother appears to have been uncovered by the police.

But irrespective of who had actually pulled the trigger of the murder weapon, Siqueiros was unquestionably a major accomplice in the crime. From his place of hiding he wrote an article for an independent review, attempting to justify the May 24 attack: that is, himself and those behind him. 'The Cardenas Government', he wrote, 'does not take into account the fact that the authors of the attentat gave way to an act of revolutionary despair, condemnable certainly, but politically and humanly justifiable, against one of the greatest renegades of the cause of world revolution, to whom the President, in contradiction to his political thought and work, had given asylum in Mexico'. So writes the man who before the attempted assassination posed in front of his accomplices in false moustache, glasses and the purloined uniform of an army officer, and joined in the

light-minded laughter. This representative of 'revolutionary despair' who did not forget always to carry with him in his flight, in addition to a considerable roll of notes, a bottle of brilliantine! What then was it that drove him and his associates to the point of 'desperation'? Was it the sufferings of the Mexican people, the persecution and imprisonment of his comrades under the iron dictatorship of Trotsky?

But the very men for whom Siqueiros acted proclaimed that Trotsky was forever discredited in the eyes of the working people; that he had not the slightest political influence; that he was the leader of a pitiful handful of people devoid of any influence whatever and impotent to affect the course of history.

Was it really the desire to sacrifice themselves for a noble cause that led Siqueiros and his friends into this criminal adventure? The behaviour of those apprehended gave an unequivocal answer. They did not stand on any revolutionary principles to justify themselves; they did not even refuse to betray one another. And does the cold-blooded murder of Harte come under the category of 'politically and humanly justifiable' acts? He who on this occasion became the victim of the GPU was a young man of twenty-four. His death cannot by the greatest stretch of perverted imagination be regarded as resulting from an act of 'revolutionary despair'. It was quite simply a callous effort to cover up the trail. He was removed because he knew too much.

What stands out sharply in the above-quoted statement of Siqueiros is his blind acceptance of the views of the Kremlin. The justification of his actions is in effect based upon the verdict of the Moscow Trials. This is so undisguised that it makes his political affiliation obvious. The carrying out of the verdict is 'politically and humanly

justifiable'. There speaks the voice, the unmistakable voice of Vyshinsky.

Siqueiros proved to be no lone unfriended individual on the run and rejected by his political co-thinkers as 'very dangerous to the working-class'. On the contrary, events demonstrated that behind him stood powerful interests, highly influential in Mexican society. Finally traced and arrested, held on a charge of nine counts, including one of murder, he succeeded in securing his release on bail, because the judges, although all agreeing that he had directed the attack on Trotsky, could not agree that he had actually pulled the trigger of the weapon that killed Harte. Less than a month after his release he jumped bail and flew to Cuba, in spite of the fact that his preparations for flight, including the securing of a passport, had been reported in the Mexican press well beforehand. Arrested again in Chile as a fugitive from justice, he was again released on the intervention of the Mexican ambassador. Later he returned to Mexico of his own free will, only too confident that he could 'beat the rap'. He was received with acclamation by the Stalinists, further proof, if any is needed, of the worthlessness of their previous statements, and to date, although the charges against him still stand, no trial has taken place; nor has he, up to the time of writing these lines, been re-arrested. He probably never will be. The resources of the GPU are very great; its tentacles reach out in all directions, into the least suspected places, and some of those who serve it are not even fully aware of the fact themselves. And the art of utilizing disagreements among one's enemies, although not invented by the GPU, has been brought by it to a point of high perfection.

CHAPTER IX

THE SENTENCE IS EXECUTED

The two men entered the study. The one with the manuscript in his hand sat down at the desk and began to read through it. The other placed his raincoat over a chair in such a way that the right-hand pocket could be easily and quickly reached. A minute passed. . . . Two minutes. . . . The man reading was absorbed. . . . He did not notice the hand steal towards the pocket in which lay the short-handled mountaineer's ice-pick. The assassin raised his weapon and struck with all his force at the bent head.

There was a heart-stopping scream. Blood spattered over the manuscript as the wounded man staggered to his feet. Half paralysed by that cry, the assassin made an indecisive movement, as if to strike again, and as he did so the wounded man seized the hand holding the pick and bit it. The weapon fell to the floor. Outside in the patio feet pounded. . . .

Although armed with a fully-loaded revolver and having a dagger in the other pocket of his raincoat, the assassin made no resistance when the guards burst into the room and fell on him. He had not believed it possible that a man could still retain consciousness after such a blow. That scream had made escape impossible. He had hoped to do his work in silence; before entering the house he had turned his car round in the lane; there had just been a chance that he could have made it. . . .

Was it the enormity of his deed that now unnerved him? Or the sudden snapping of the extreme nervous tension under which he had been living for so many months,

playing the role of friend while all the time preparing to kill? Or was it simply the furious onslaught of the guards and the fear of his own death that paralysed him?

Somehow the wounded man had summoned up enough strength to stagger away from the assassin towards the door leading from the study to the dining room. Here, supporting himself against the door jamb, his wife found him. Sobbing, 'What's happened? What's happened?' she held him in her arms. Together they made a few steps into the room. Calmly, without anger or bitterness, he pronounced the assassin's name—'Jacson'. She helped him to lie on the floor, placed a cushion under his head, tried to wipe some of the blood from his face. He looked at her. Gravely, almost severely, he said, 'Natacha, I love you'.

A while later he turned to one of the guards kneeling beside him with blanched face. 'He must not be killed, he must be made to talk.' He spoke slowly and with difficulty, but his brain was clear. The assassin must be made to talk!

Inside the study the guards menaced 'Jacson', striking him with the butts of their revolvers.

'It was the GPU that sent you! Admit it!'

Desperately, the assassin denied it. No! No! It was they! Who—they? It was a man, I don't know him! But he made me do it! How—made you?

Then, like a sudden glare of light momentary revealing a glimpse of . . . what was it? What was the half-seen monstrous shape those words revealed? Words not to be forced from him again throughout the long hours of police interrogation.

'They have something on me!' Jacson cried. 'They are holding my Mother in prison!'

Yes. Who were *they*?

In spite of all efforts to save his life, Leon Trotsky died

on August 21, 1940, from the wound inflicted upon him by Jacson.

As has been proved, the mass attack on May 24 was the work of members of the Mexican Communist Party, inspired and organized by the GPU. This attack having failed, did the GPU resort to another, more subtle method? Did they, in fact, already hold Jacson in reserve in the event of the first attempt failing?

This was the problem facing the Mexican police. Jacson had been caught literally red-handed; his guilt was not in question. But had he accomplices? And, if so, who were they?

The only person coming under suspicion as a direct accomplice was Sylvia Ageloff, a member of the New York Trotskyist organization. It was she who had introduced him into the Trotsky household in Mexico. How and in what circumstances did she first meet Jacson?

Held by the police for investigation, Ageloff appeared to be genuinely broken-up by the tragedy, blaming herself in the bitterest terms for having been instrumental in introducing Jacson to Trotsky. She had first met Jacson in July, 1938, in Paris; had accepted him at his face value, believing him to be a supporter of the Trotskyist movement. The manner in which she had been brought into contact with Jacson is revealing. A former high-ranking member of the Communist Party of the United States, Louis Budenz, relates (*This is My Story*, McGraw-Hill Book Co. Inc., 1947) that a GPU agent named 'Roberts', then operating in the United States, displayed considerable interest in Sylvia Ageloff. Roberts got Budenz to put him in contact with a 'Miss Y', a close friend of Ageloff. Under Roberts' instructions this Miss Y travelled with Ageloff to Paris and there introduced her to Jacson. According to Budenz, Miss Y was told that the purpose of her undercover work

on behalf of the GPU was to check up on people who were trying to get visas for the USSR. It was only after Trotsky's assassination, says Budenz, that both he and Miss Y, another dupe like Renée Steiner, realized the true reason for Roberts' interest in Ageloff.

It is unlikely that Budenz should wish to concoct a story of this nature. Moreover, the Miss Y in question has since been identified as a woman who at one time acted as his secretary. However, there is in addition other evidence connecting Jacson with the GPU.

When Jacson was arrested he handed to the police a letter purporting to explain his motives for committing the crime. In this letter he claimed to be a disillusioned member of the Trotskyist organization. In the circumstances the difficulties of supporting such a claim by evidence will be apparent. But had he been a member he could at least have referred to some names or to some meetings he had attended in Paris, or to some activity in which he had taken part. The only name he was able to mention from among the French Trotskyists was that of Rudolph Klement, whom he claimed to have known well. Klement—who had been assassinated. Strangely enough both the letter allegedly written by Klement, and Jacson's letter had been typed without date, the date having afterwards been filled in by hand. And, as we shall see, the two letters had the same basic political content.

Jacson, however, did not maintain his claims to have been a member of the Trotskyist organization.

He asserted in his letter that he had met a member of the 'Committee' of the Fourth International in Paris and this person had, after 'many conversations', suggested that he take a trip to Mexico to see Trotsky, who expected of him 'something more than could be expected of a simple militant'. He was not, he wrote, told what this 'something'

was. He was not given a letter of introduction to Trotsky. He did not know the name of this alleged member of the 'Committee', although he claimed to have seen him fifteen or twenty times.

How would it be possible for him to get to see Trotsky when he arrived in Mexico? He was an unknown; he had no record of political struggle behind him; he had no document to prove his bona fides. It is clear that Sylvia Ageloff was the person destined to serve the purpose of getting him accepted by Trotsky as a genuine supporter. If he had really been commissioned by the 'Committee' of the Fourth International he would undoubtedly have had some document establishing his identity and vouching for his reliability. Why should a raw recruit be selected for the performance of some mysterious mission, 'something more than could be expected of a simple militant'? Jacson does not answer this vital question.

When he arrived in Mexico, says Jacson, 'he was told' not to approach Trotsky for some months, 'in order to avoid drawing attention to himself'. Who told him? Who gave him these instructions? Could it have been 'they'?

He did not, in fact, visit the Trotsky household until nine months after his arrival in Mexico; not, that is, until after Sylvia Ageloff arrived there. She was the only person who knew him. As the friend of Ageloff, a trusted member of long standing, he would be accepted.

When at last he did see Trotsky he was told what was expected of him. He was to go to Russia and 'organize a series of attentats against different persons, and in the first place against Stalin'. He was to 'disorganize' the Red Army and carry out industrial wrecking and sabotage. In other words, Jacson in his letter simply repeats the charges made against the accused 'Trotskyists' in the Moscow

Trials; using precisely the words used by the accused Fritz David and Berman-Yurin.*

This proposal, wrote Jacson, was 'contrary to all the principles of a struggle which up to then I had considered as frank and loyal, and destroyed all my principles'. So, all his principles were destroyed in an instant by this alleged conversation in which he was asked to do something against all his principles. And where had he in the first place acquired his principles? According to his first testimony, as a member of the Trotskyist organization; according to later testimony, through Sylvia Ageloff.

What was his reaction to this surprising proposal of Trotsky's? He would have us believe that, with all that he had up to that time been taught by the Trotskyists suddenly overthrown by their leader; with 'all his principles destroyed' and himself 'morally ruined', he kept silent and did not allow it to be seen that this was the end of all his hopes. He did not scornfully reject Trotsky's 'proposals'; did not break off the conversation and go forth and denounce him; did not even venture to suggest that such 'instructions' were contrary to all his writings and speeches over a lifetime. No, he just kept quiet—because he wanted to see 'just how far the baseness and hatred of this man would go'.

One may find it a little strange that Jacson, visiting Trotsky in the guise of a friend, yet armed with a dagger, a revolver and an alpine pick for the purpose of assassinating him, should also carry on his person a letter accusing his victim of 'baseness' and denouncing him as a terrorist! Yet is this not the selfsame theme that runs like a red thread through all the denunciations of the GPU?

Wrecking, sabotage and assassination were not enough

* In particular see *The Case of the Trotskyite-Zinovievite Terrorist Centre*, Moscow, 1936, pp. 94 and 113.

for Jacson. He wanted Trotsky to confess, like the 'defendants' in the Moscow and other 'confessional trials', that he was acting on the orders of a 'great nation', a 'certain foreign parliamentary committee'. And sure enough Trotsky is made to confess, in Jacson's letter, that he relies 'not only on the support of a great nation, but also on the support of a certain parliamentary committee'. Is this not again exactly in accordance with the stage directions of all the 'trials' instigated and organized by the GPU?

For Jacson this 'admission' was the straw that broke the camel's back. Up to then he had only lost all his principles, but after this he 'arrived at the conclusion that the Stalinists were perhaps not so far from the truth when they accused Trotsky of using the working class as he would his *première chemise*'. This phrase is particularly revealing. It is an admission—guarded, but still plain enough—that he is writing the letter as a Stalinist; it is confirmation of what we have already argued from the style of the letter and the content of the charges against Trotsky. The view that this letter was written in defence of a known political line is further strengthened by its assertion that Trotsky is certainly involved in some plot to assassinate Lombardo Toledano, the Stalinist leader of the Mexican trade-union movement; by the statement that Trotsky is 'naturally' in favour of General Almazan (at that time widely considered as the would-be-Hitler of Mexican politics); and by references to the consul of a great foreign nation who could 'say something about the source of Trotsky's finances', etc., etc. No one who is at all familiar with GPU tactics can avoid noticing that the technique is identical.

It may be suggested that the writer of this letter was mentally deranged. But Jacson's subsequent behaviour during his imprisonment has shown not the slightest sign of mental instability. The question has never been raised.

Jacson is and was completely sane. And, after all, a precisely similar mishmash of fantastic nonsense, in very much greater volume, had already been presented to the world in the Hall of Justice in Moscow. No one has so far suggested that the stage-managers of these dramas were insane. On the contrary, large numbers of normally intelligent people have been prepared to risk their own reputations, to bring in question their own mental state, by trying to justify those parodies of justice. If Jacson was insane when he wrote the letter, then so were those who framed the charges of the Moscow Trials and later trials: for the charges in both cases are in essence identical.

Jacson's letter was a statement of the GPU. But apart from the manifest absurdity of the charges made in it, it reveals a vital contradiction between his alleged reason for coming to Mexico and his actions when he got there. His peculiar excuse for not trying to see Trotsky until nine months had elapsed has been noted. But he made absolutely no attempt to obtain a private interview with Trotsky, even after he had already been accepted as a regular visitor, until his penultimate visit. It was only then that he asked for a private interview, in order that Trotsky could look over the draft of an article he had written. The blood-stained manuscript itself is proof enough that he *needed* a definite reason for such an interview. But why?—if Trotsky had already told him what his 'mission' was, a 'mission' of such scope and magnitude that it would necessarily require lengthy working-out and discussion. If Jacson's story was true, he would have had access to Trotsky at almost any time, he would not need the excuse of a political article. This clue of the blood-stained manuscript destroys the whole fabric of his story.

But who exactly was this Frank Jacson? The Mexican police were satisfied that Sylvia Ageloff had been no more

than an unwilling instrument. They rejected Jacson's tale of the Fourth International 'Committee' member. But how then had he come to Mexico? Who had provided the passport? Had Jacson any connection with the May 24 attack?

Jacson said that he had destroyed all his personal papers, including his passport, while on the way to commit the murder. He alleged that Trotsky had made him travel on a false passport so that he would 'become a terrorist in his service'. This passport would therefore have been a most valuable piece of evidence in support of his charge. But he had destroyed it. And the reason, of course, is not far to seek. Passports can be traced to their rightful owners. The original owner of the passport used by Jacson might lead to the people behind him.

Jacson and his accomplices slipped up badly here. For the number of this passport had been notified by the authorities when Jacson entered the country. And this passport, No. 31,377, had been issued in March, 1937, to a Canadian citizen, Tony Babich, born in Yugoslavia and naturalized in 1929. Babich had used this passport to go to Spain as a combatant in Stalin's International Brigade. And what happened to the passports of such volunteers has been related by Krivitsky as follows:

All the volunteers' passports were taken up when they arrived in Spain, and very rarely was a passport returned. Even when a man was discharged, he was told that his passport had been lost. From the United States alone about 2,000 volunteers came over, and genuine American passports are highly prized at GPU headquarters in Moscow. Nearly every diplomatic pouch from Spain that arrived at the Lubianka contained a batch of passports from members of the International Brigade. (*I Was Stalin's Agent*, Right Book Club, 1940, p. 113.)

This allegation was completely substantiated later by the Canadian Government's Royal Commission already referred

to in Chapter VII of this book. The case of a certain Ignacy Witczak was investigated. Witczak came to Canada from Poland, became a naturalized Canadian, and when the Spanish Civil War broke out went to fight in the International Brigade. His passport was taken from him but not returned when he was discharged; he was informed that it had been destroyed when a truck containing supplies had been bombed. However, it had not been destroyed. It turned up again in the possession of a mysterious couple going under the name of Witczak. 'Ignacy' and 'Bunia Witczak' landed in New York from Cologne on September 13, 1938. This phoney Ignacy Witczak and his wife were traced by the police investigating the GPU spy ring in Canada to the University of Southern California, where the man was taking a course of study in the social sciences. Discreet enquiries disclosed little of his past or his present activities. He occasionally spoke of life in Paris and Shanghai, was fluent in both Chinese and Japanese, and was plentifully supplied with cash, although the source of this could not be discovered. One day the couple left the city and did not return. They had apparently got wind of the enquiries being made about them. From that point on all trace of them was lost.

Witczak's passport was used by the GPU. And so was Babich's. There was no other way through which Jacson could have got this passport except the GPU. That is why Jacson destroyed the passport which, in his own words, 'would have corroborated my declaration in all its details'. The destruction of this material evidence by Jacson, or some other interested person, does not make sense if, as he asserted, it demonstrated a connection with Trotsky; it does make sense if the passport was furnished by the GPU. And the presence of a strong force of the GPU in Spain during the Civil War is a matter of history; its control over

the International Brigade is known; its appropriation and criminal misuse of the volunteers' passports has been demonstrated. Small wonder that Jacson preserved a singular reticence about the passport, claiming that although he knew it was a false one he never even so much as looked at it!

Sylvia Ageloff returned from Paris to New York in February, 1939. Jacson arrived there unexpectedly in September. He told her that he had to go to Mexico on business. He left for Mexico with the understanding that she should follow later. Sylvia went to Mexico in January, 1940. He was extremely vague about the business he said he was engaged in, but did go so far as to give her a phone number and an address. Both of these proved later to be false. The phone number he probably made up, but it is surely more than a coincidence that he should have given, as the building in which his 'office' was situated, the *Edificio Ermita*. For in this same building were the headquarters of David Alfaro Siqueiros, the leader of the May 24 assault! If he had connections with Siqueiros the name of this building would be the first to spring to his mind. Moreover, he would know the building well enough to know that the number he gave, 820, did not exist. In the unlikely event of Sylvia bothering to investigate no harm would have been done; he could make up some other story. And at that time the May 24 assault had not taken place. He could not know it would fail and, worse, that the participants would be traced, and traced to that building.

Trotsky and his wife first met Jacson on May 28. Sylvia went to say goodbye; she was returning to New York the following day. A short while after, Jacson also left for New York. In his interrogation he insisted that this had nothing to do with the fact that the police investigation on the May 24 affair was getting warm. It was not because he

feared arrest but because he simply could not live apart from Sylvia. He was away between twenty-seven and thirty days, when he again arrived in Mexico. There can be little doubt that this trip to New York was made for other reasons than an irrepressible urge to see the woman whose affection was inevitably, as he well knew, to be changed to intense hatred and loathing by his subsequent crime. It is not difficult to deduce from the entire circumstances what the purpose of this visit was. The mass attack had failed; it was necessary to bring into operation the reserve plan. When Jackson returned to Mexico he already carried in his pocket the letter in defence of the assassination—all that it lacked was the date. He had only to fill it in on the day of the crime.

When Sylvia Ageloff came again to Mexico, it was to find a man with a terrible burden on his soul. It was the burden of the horrible deed he had to commit. Had to? What does that mean?

In his letter he set out the political case in justification of the assassination; this followed the well-worn GPU line of argument. But in addition he felt it necessary to add a motivation based upon personal considerations. He had left France on a false passport and since Trotsky had supplied him with this he was completely in Trotsky's power. The only way out was to kill Trotsky. To give this grossly absurd argument a little more colour, he added that Trotsky wanted to separate him from Sylvia. Thus he piled one absurdity on to another. He had already left Mexico once. Why did he have to return? It was not on account of any legitimate business, for he was not able to show that he had held any position whatever with any business firm. Yet he had apparently unlimited financial resources; he bought himself a car in Mexico; he left three thousand dollars with Sylvia in New York. On the face of things there appears to

have been absolutely no reason why he should not have left Mexico at any time he chose and gone back to France. There must, then, have been some strong reason why he did not. His manner before the killing was that of a man obsessed, screwing his courage to the sticking point; he was by no means the calm, cold-blooded killer with nerves of steel. He was paid for the job, and paid handsomely, of that there can be no doubt, but was there not, in addition, some threat over him by those who paid?

When seized by the guards immediately after the murder, he had cried out, 'They are holding my Mother in prison!'

Trotsky's secretary-bodyguards could have had no interest in inventing these words. They did not know if his mother was alive or dead. It was torn out of him in a moment of desperation, when the consciousness of blood-guilt was strongest, when the psychological defences were at their weakest. These words stand out from all the tangle of lies, half-truths, evasions, contradictions which make up his subsequent testimony. There is a ring of truth in them.

When asked where he obtained his money from, he answered that the mysterious members of the Fourth International had given him two hundred dollars with which to get to Mexico, but in addition his mother had given him five thousand dollars. Why did he have to mention his mother? Why did he not say his father, and thus cover up the slip he had made in referring to his mother's imprisonment? Or he could simply have said that Trotsky's representative gave him the money, instead of this obviously inadequate two hundred dollars. This, it is true, would have contradicted the reference in his letter to the poverty of the Trotskyist movement, but it would have been in accord with his statement that Trotsky was financed by a 'foreign power'. The only feasible explanation for his having made mention of his mother is simply that she must

have been alive and that the thought of her must have been uppermost in his mind. This ties in with his exclamation that '*they*' were holding his mother.

When a man is seeking to cover up his past he either makes up his lies out of the whole cloth or, more often, he mingles truth with falsehood. Jacson's past life before he met Sylvia Ageloff is still largely a mystery. He told the police that his real name was Jacques Mornard Vandendreschd, that he was born in Teheran, Persia, in 1904, where his father had held a diplomatic post. Walter Lorigan, chargé d'affaires of the Belgian Legation in Mexico City, interviewed Jacson and 'arrived at the conclusion that he is not of Belgian nationality, nor does he know Belgium, and that all his statements in this respect are false'. Also proved to be false was his claim to have worked as a journalist in Paris. He could not prove that he had at any time in his life held a job of any kind. The little that he was prepared to say about his past appears to have been false from beginning to end, unconnected with any real events in his life. It is possible that he had some connection with Persia, but if this was so, he did not reveal the whole truth. It is known that he visited Brussels in the summer of 1938, ostensibly for the purpose of seeing his mother. However, when Sylvia went to see him in Brussels she could not find him at the address given and returned to Paris without seeing him. It is clear that he deliberately avoided introducing to his mother the woman he had promised to marry, that is, if his mother really had been in Brussels at that time. But one thing seems clear, Jacson's mother was alive and the thought of her was constantly with him. When he goes to Brussels, it is to see her; when asked where his money came from, it is from her; when threatened by Trotsky's guards, he cries out that his mother is in danger. This fact of his personal background, trivial as it may appear, is the only one which

can be relied upon. And in view of his cry that he had been forced to murder Trotsky in order to ensure her safety, this fact is important.

But who was she? Where was she? Jacson could not or would not say. There could only have been two reasons for his silence: either he did not want to bring disgrace on her, or she was really in the power of those who controlled him through her.

New light on this aspect of the affair has been thrown by the revelations of Julian Gorkin. Gorkin was one of the accused POUM leaders sentenced in the GPU trial in Barcelona. He escaped from imprisonment and went to Mexico and there, in collaboration with the Mexican Chief of Police, General Sanchez Salazar, wrote a detailed, documented account of the Trotsky assassination. In an appendix to this book (*Murder in Mexico*, Secker & Warburg, 1950), Gorkin affirms that Jacson's mother was a woman named Caridad Mercador, a Catalan. Caridad Mercador, says Gorkin, lived in France and Belgium for many years and educated her children in those countries. A confirmed and ardent follower of Stalin, she was active in the 'permeation from within' tactic of the Comintern towards the Socialist Party in France, in which party she and her daughter worked for some considerable time on behalf of the Stalinists. When the Spanish Civil War broke out she went to Catalonia, where she was active in the Stalinist controlled PSUC. Gorkin claims to have positive and irrefutable proof that Jacson is one of her sons. Veterans of the Spanish War have confirmed that they knew him as Ramon del Rio Mercador, a member of the Catalan Communist militia who was wounded in the right fore-arm. Jacson bears a scar on his right fore-arm.

From 1940 to August, 1944, Caridad Mercador lived in Moscow together with her youngest son Luis. When she

at last left Moscow she left this son behind. She then went to Mexico and lived there under an assumed name from October, 1944, to November, 1945, when she went to Paris, where she is at present living with another son and her daughter.

All this certainly fits in with the known facts about Jacson. They explain his claim to Belgian citizenship; his perfect knowledge of French; and the hitherto puzzling fact that he also speaks fluent Spanish, so fluent that it was impossible to accept his claim to have learnt it during the time he was in Mexico. The fact that all the leading lights of the May 24 attack had been Stalinist ex-combatants in the Spanish Civil War also has a bearing on the case. What more suitable instrument could there be than one of their ex-comrades-in-arms to serve as reserve in case of their failure? And if his mother was in Moscow the reason for his anxiety about her safety is at once obvious. And the true source of his income, which did not cease after his arrest and imprisonment, and has not ceased today, is made clear.

The judges before whom Jacson stood his trial for murder concluded that he had one purpose and one purpose only in coming to Mexico. His mission was to murder Trotsky. On April 16, 1943, he was sentenced to twenty years' imprisonment.

Jacson has kept his mouth shut. He will continue to do so, unless some entirely new situation forcibly breaks the chains which bind him to the GPU.

When in August, 1940, the assassin struck the blow which rid Stalin of his most feared and hated enemy, he was carrying out the following verdict:

Lev Davidovich Trotsky, and his son, Lev Lvovich Sedov, now abroad, convicted by the evidence of the accused . . . and also by the materials in the present case as having directly prepared and

personally directed the organization in the USSR of terroristic acts against the leaders of the GPSU and the Soviet State, are subject, in the event of their being discovered on the territory of the USSR, to immediate arrest and trial by the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court of the USSR.

These concluding words of the Official Report of the 1936 Moscow Trial were repeated in essence in the trial of the following year. In neither of these Reports did the authors apparently think it peculiar to promise to 'try' two men already 'convicted by the evidence'. All that mattered was that the sentence of death should be passed.

And it was Frank Jacson, alias Jacques Mornard Vandendreschd, alias Ramon del Rio Mercador, who was chosen to execute this sentence on the person of Leon Trotsky.

CHAPTER X

WHO KILLED KIROV?

Our successes are truly enormous. The devil knows—to speak simply as a human being, one wants just to live on and on—Look! Look around at what is being accomplished! This is really fact!!’*

The speaker’s voice is charged with emotion; his brilliant oratory flows over the audience in a hymn of praise to the Leader who has made this heaven possible; the marvellously cadenced melody of his voice invests the stock phrases with new meaning, banishes from all minds the grim realities of the world outside. In Germany the dark flood of Nazism had engulfed an entire people and is licking at the crumbling bastions of European civilization, but here in the USSR there is the light of a dawn that none wishes to recognize as false. And in this hall, sounding the note of optimism and hope that all desire to hear, is the foremost spokesman of the ‘new course’, the path of reconciliation; an easing of the tension under which the nation has suffered so long; an end to the bitterness of internal strife and a beginning of the new period in which the blood poured out upon the earth shall yield a harvest of social harmony and physical well being.

As the speaker ends, his audience rises to him in a storm of loud and prolonged applause, and when the delighted delegates chat during the recess of the Congress they openly wonder whose ovation was the greater—Stalin’s or Kirov’s. And what harm can there be in such a comparison? Is not Kirov one of Stalin’s closest comrades-in-arms? Hearing

* 17 *Syezd Vsesoyuznoi Kommunisticheskoi Partii (B)*, Moscow, 1934, p. 258.

this talk, the genial smile on the face of The Boss does not fade; if he has any private thoughts he keeps them to himself.

How beautiful it is to live now: this was the theme of the Seventeenth Party Congress in February, 1934. But in December of that same year the most outstanding exponent of that theme, Sergei Mironovich Kirov, characterized by the former Soviet diplomat Alexander Barmine as an 'orator second only to Trotsky', was no longer in a position to enjoy the good times he proclaimed with such eloquence. He lay with a bullet in his brain, struck down by a member of his own Party.

At the news of this assassination a sense of gloomy foreboding must have fallen upon many, but few could have foreseen the full extent and frightfulness of the events to which it gave rise. In view of Kirov's known views, it crossed no one's mind that his death could possibly be laid at the door of any inner-Party Opposition, and that it presaged a revival of the terror, directed this time against the Party itself. Well, perhaps it is too much to say that such thoughts crossed no one's mind; perhaps there were those for whom the assassination presented a heaven-sent opportunity. . . . But in the broad Party circles this could not be so. A glance at Kirov's career will show why few, if any, immediately connected his death with any anti-Stalin Opposition within the Russian Communist Party.

Sergei Mironovich Kirov joined the Bolsheviks in the year 1904 and became a member of the Central Committee in 1922. In 1923 he was sent to Azerbaijan to strengthen the control of the central government power and in 1926 he replaced Zinoviev as secretary of the Leningrad Party organization. At the decisive Fifteenth Party Congress in 1927, when the Trotsky-Zinoviev Opposition, already split within itself, suffered defeat, he distinguished himself as a

spokesman for the Stalin line. He played a prominent role in the ruthless semi-military operations against the peasantry that marked the carrying through of the first Five-Year Plan; he was in charge of the construction of the Baltic-White Sea Canal, and had jurisdiction over the concentration camps of the Kem and Murmansk coasts. In 1930 he became a member of the Political Bureau. There was at no time in his career any question of 'political deviation' on his part; he was through and through a man of the governmental machine created by Stalin.

But with the completion of the first Five-Year Plan there arose a wide-spread hope that the terrible pressure its execution had entailed would be eased. The experiences of those years had left behind an almost universal, bitter resentment of the ruling clique. The mood of the masses was reflected even within the ranks of the Communist Party, where two viewpoints inevitably arose: there were those who favoured a relaxation of the terror and those who mortally feared any 'liberal' concessions. Kirov became the foremost representative of the 'liberal' tendency. Thus Alexander Barmine says of him that

. . . he partly revived the old 'liberal' spirit that had made Leningrad in the post-revolutionary period a cultural and scientific centre, carrying the policy of conciliation as far as he could in his own district. In the Politburo he had been a staunch supporter of Stalin's 'general line', and there could be no question of his orthodoxy (*One Who Survived*, G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York, 1945, p. 247).

This viewpoint gained ground. Hitler's conquest of Germany strengthened those who favoured a closing of the Party ranks. When the harvest of 1933 gave evidence of being exceptionally good, many members of the Party expelled for Opposition activities were re-admitted, among them Zinoviev and Kamenev. Those who hoped for a

break with the past also found comfort in the transformation in July, 1934, of the dreaded GPU into the Commissariat for Home Affairs. This, although events proved it a change of form and not of content, could, coupled with a certain limitation of the powers of the political police, be taken as reflecting the desire to move towards a milder regime. At the same time, however, the exponents of the 'hard' policy continued to press their views. The situation was fluid. But no one could be in doubt about Kirov's attitude. He stood for the 'soft' policy and his support of it was all the more telling in that he had always in the past shown himself a merciless executor of the Stalin line and no breath of suspicion had ever touched his loyalty to the 'genial Boss'.

At the Seventeenth Party Congress in February, 1934, Kirov was re-elected to the Politburo and also became a secretary of the Central Committee, which involved his transfer to Moscow. However, on one excuse or other this transfer was put off, although he attended the meetings of the Politburo, where he continued to advance his proposals for the inauguration of the 'new course'.

Unknown as Kirov may have been to the outside world before his assassination, he was nonetheless quite a considerable figure among the Soviet ruling élite. All the indications point to the fact that shortly before his death he had in fact become a close runner-up to Stalin in popularity—if such a word is permissible.

This, then, was the man whose death provoked the storm that swept the Soviet world, and whose lightnings struck fatally even in distant lands.

The assassin was caught red-handed, but in spite of this fact he remains for us a shadowy figure. We can only say of him with any degree of assurance that he was a member of the Communist Party and that his name was Leonid

Nikolayev. In December, 1936, and February, 1937, the *Menshevik Socialist Messenger* published a most interesting document, 'Letter of an Old Bolshevik', giving a detailed analysis of the political background, psychological atmosphere and immediate consequences of the Kirov case. According to this letter, Nikolayev had fought in the Civil War from the age of sixteen and become a member of the Young Communist League at the front. He was at one stage associated with the GPU, apparently he even became a member of the guard at the Smolny Institute, where Kirov had his office. But while this document bears evidence of authenticity and is of value to the student of Soviet Russian affairs, our examination of the Kirov case does not have to rely on its statements about Nikolayev. What is important to note is that official Soviet statements keep us in the dark about the personality of the assassin. The only hint of his past career is the statement of W. G. Shepherd, writing semi-officially as the Moscow correspondent of the British *Daily Worker*, that Nikolayev was a 'member of the former Workers' and Peasants' Inspection' (*The Truth about the Murder of Kirov*, Modern Books Ltd., p. 7). But we do know that he was in possession of a revolver and that he had access to Kirov's office in the Smolny Institute. An association with the GPU would account for this. And, as we shall see in due course, the GPU was actually involved.

So, precisely in what circumstances the deed was done; how he gained access to Kirov, where he was working at the time; what his relations, if any, were with the victim—on all these important matters the Soviet communiqués were silent.

At first there was no suggestion that the business was linked with any organized opposition within the Communist Party. On the contrary, the execution of 104

White Guardists who had illegally entered Russia from border states, gave, and was apparently intended to give, the impression that the affair concerned these elements alone. Incidentally, all those executed had been arrested some time before the commission of the crime. Only later was this version abandoned, when the arrest, on December 16, of fifteen former members of the Leningrad Opposition showed which way the wind was blowing. *

Kirov's death was immediately followed by the announcement of a new Government decree aimed at speeding up 'the investigation and trial of cases of terrorist organizations and terrorist acts against workers of the Soviet Power'. This decree, passed the very same day of the crime, signed by M. Kalinin and A. Yenukidze (he too is fated to fall)* laid down that the investigation of such cases should take not longer than ten days; that the indictment should be handed to accused one day before trial; that cases should be heard without participation of counsel for prosecution or defence; that no appeal would be allowed against sentence or for pardon; and that the death sentence was to be carried out as soon as it had been pronounced. The GPU was thus officially given a free hand. The speed at which this decree was drawn up and promulgated shows that the advocates of the 'hard' policy were right on their toes.

But the ten days' limit laid down in the above decree were not enough to extract a confession from Nikolayev and his alleged associates. Only on December 27 was the indictment against him, L. I. Kotolinov, N. P. Myasnikov, N. N. Shatski and ten others made public. All were allegedly former members of the Zinoviev Opposition

* *Abel Yenukidze*, one-time Secretary of the Central Executive Committee of the Soviet, Stalin's closest friend, almost like a brother to him, shot in 1936 without trial.

(this is understandable, since in 1925, ninety per cent. of the Leningrad membership had sided with Zinoviev). Then for the first time the name of the 'arch-fiend' Trotsky was mentioned. According to Nikolayev's confession a certain foreign Consul had given him 5,000 roubles for the commission of the crime and had asked for a letter to Trotsky. Henceforth anyone who had at any time given support to Trotsky's inner-Party struggle, and their name was legion, knew that he was suspect.

The name of this Consul, at first not divulged, was later, on the insistence of the diplomatic corps, revealed as the Latvian Consul Bisseneks. After the revelation of his name Bisseneks disappeared from the scene. What his exact role was is hard to determine, but it is significant that his name is not mentioned in any of the subsequent trials, all of which stemmed from the Kirov case.

Was Bisseneks in fact an *agent provocateur*? The complete absence of any further reference to him or to the Lettish Government, also charged with complicity in the murder, gives ample room for suspicion. But if so, on whose behalf was he really working?

On December 2 and 3 the head of the Leningrad GPU, F. D. Medved, and eleven of his colleagues were arrested. On January 23 Medved was sentenced to three years' imprisonment; his deputy, Zaporozhetz, to the same term; Baltsevich to ten years; and the other nine to two years each. This trial, like that of the actual assassin, took place in secret, but the official communiqué stated that the accused had 'possessed information concerning the preparations for the attempt on S. M. Kirov . . . and failed to take the necessary measures'; they 'took no measures for the timely exposure and prevention' of the crime 'although they had every possibility of so doing' (author's emphasis). In the circumstances these sentences were astoundingly light,

particularly since it appears that the prisoners were given positions of trust in the concentration camps to which they were sent. They had 'every possibility' of preventing the crime—that is categorical enough in all conscience. And if Zinoviev, Kamenev, Yevdokimov and other long-service Party members could be given terms of imprisonment ranging from five to ten years simply for 'moral responsibility' (for which there was no evidence other than 'confessions'); and if 104 persons already in jail at the time of the murder could be shot as accomplices; and if anything from 100,000 to 200,000 inhabitants of Leningrad alone could be deported to the Volga, the Urals, Central Asia and Siberia as suspects—the questions naturally arise: Why were the sentences of these GPU men so mild? Who stood behind them, protecting them?

More than four years after the crime Henry G. Yagoda, former chief of the entire GPU, speaks at his trial:

1939

In the first place, the murder of Kirov. How did the matter stand? In 1934, in the summer, Yenukidze informed me that the centre of the 'bloc of Rights and Trotskyists' had adopted a decision to organize the assassination of Kirov. Rykov took a direct part in the adoption of this decision. . . . It became quite clear to me that the Trotskyite-Zinovievite terrorist groups were making definite preparations for this murder. *Needless to say here, I tried to object, I marshalled a series of arguments about this terrorist act being inexpedient and unnecessary. I even argued that I, as a person responsible for guarding the members of the government, would be the first to be held responsible in case a terrorist act was committed against a member of the government. Needless to say, my objections were not taken into consideration and had no effect. Yenukidze insisted that I was not to place any obstacles in the way; the terrorist act, he said, would be carried out by the Trotskyite-Zinovievite group. Owing to this I was compelled to instruct Zaporozhnetz, who occupied the post of Assistant Chief of the Regional Administration of the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs (i.e. the GPU—author), not to place any obstacles in the way of the terrorist act against*

Kirov. Some time later Zaporozhetz informed me that the organs of the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs had detained *Nikolayev, in whose possession a revolver and a chart of the route Kirov usually took had been found. Nikolayev was released.* (Official Report, March, 1938, Moscow Trial, pp. 572-3; author's emphasis.)

If Yagoda is speaking the truth, then the complicity of Medved and his colleagues is beyond question. He asserts that the Leningrad political police actually arrested Nikolayev before the crime; that he had in his possession a revolver and a chart of the route Kirov usually took. Yet in spite of these more than suspicious circumstances, Nikolayev was released. Now—the question arises: How, with all the top-ranking GPU connections the conspirators had, did Nikolayev ever come to be arrested in the first place? According to Yagoda's secretary Bulanov 'there was an occasion when the whole affair was nearly exposed, when several days before the assassination of Kirov the guard detained Nikolayev by mistake, and a notebook and revolver were found in his portfolio, but . . . Zaporozhetz released him in time' (ibid. p. 558). Yagoda's statement that he had given Zaporozhetz instructions 'not to place any obstacles in the way' has already been cited. From this it appears that the release of Nikolayev resulted from these instructions. But earlier testimony on the part of Yagoda contradicts this. On page 376 of the trial report we find:

Yagoda: . . . Zaporozhetz came to Moscow and reported to me that a man had been detained. . . .

Vyshinsky: In whose briefcase. . . .

Yagoda: There was a revolver and a diary. And he released him.

Vyshinsky: And you approved of this?

Yagoda: I just took note of the fact.

Vyshinsky: And then you gave instructions not to place obstacles in the way of the murder of Sergei Mironovich Kirov?

Yagoda: Yes, I did. . . . It was not like that.

Vyshinsky: In a somewhat different form?

Yagoda: It was not like that, but it is not important.

Thus, according to this version, it was only after he had been informed of Nikolayev's arrest that he gave the instruction not to place any obstacle in the way of Kirov's assassination. But at the same time he did not approve of Nikolayev's release, he merely noted the fact. And the notebook becomes a diary. But it was 'not like that'—although this is 'not important'. And then in his final plea Yagoda goes back on it all and says:

It is not only untrue to say that I was an organizer, but it is untrue to say that I was an accomplice in the murder of Kirov. I committed an extremely grave violation of duty—that is right. I answer for it in equal measure, but I was not an accomplice. Citizen Procurator, you know what complicity is just as well as I do. The entire material of the Court proceedings and the preliminary investigation has failed to prove that I was an accomplice in this vile murder.

So—Yagoda gave instructions not to place any obstacles in the way, and he did not give any instructions; he gave them before the first arrest of Nikolayev, and he gave them only after the arrest; he was an accomplice and he was not an accomplice; in the preliminary investigation he 'summoned Zaporozhetz from Leningrad and instructed him not to hinder the terrorist act' (*ibid.* p. 22), and in the Court proceedings Zaporozhetz went to Moscow on his own initiative to inform Yagoda of Nikolayev's first arrest. . . . Nobody asks what were the circumstances of the assassin's first arrest, on what grounds he was arrested. Nobody is curious as to what was in the diary—or was it a notebook?—or was it simply a chart of 'the route Kirov usually took'? Nobody wants to know where the assassin got his revolver and nobody is interested any longer in the peculiar role of the former Latvian Consul, Bisseneks.

And Medved, Zaporozhetsk, the members of the Leningrad GPU Guard—where are they? These key witnesses are not called; nor is the evidence of their secret trial available to check with the contradictory statements of Yagoda. A Public Prosecutor anxious to probe down to the last minute detail of the Kirov assassination would not have left this vital stone unturned. But Vyshinsky dared not turn it—for beneath it lay a mass of intrigue and corruption that would have destroyed his whole case.

Let us recapitulate. Kirov, champion of the new course of conciliation towards the Opposition elements within the Party, is killed. Immediately afterwards 104 White Guards are shot (the number is variously reported but all accounts agree on more than 100). The news of the death inevitably raises in all minds the question: Who benefits from this? The chief of the Leningrad GPU and eleven of his staff are arrested. Stalin himself speeds post-haste to Leningrad to personally interrogate the assassin (he is accompanied by Ordjonikidze, Commissar for Heavy Industry, whose sudden death on February 18, 1937, was perhaps convenient, but not necessarily unnatural). Members of former oppositional tendencies are arrested. Nikolayev and thirteen alleged accomplices are tried in secret and shot. Zinoviev and Kamenev admit 'moral responsibility' that is, admit that their past opposition to Stalin's policy could have inspired Nikolayev. The purge gets under way. Tens of thousands are swept up into the GPU drag-net. A series of trials, public and secret, wipe out practically the entire surviving Bolshevik 'Old Guard'. After the first Moscow Trial, Henry G. Yagoda is demoted to the post of Commissar for Communications, Yezhov taking his place. Yagoda, among the few who know all the facts behind the public façade of Soviet justice, has taken the first step down the stairway leading to the execution cellars over which he

Stalin

once ruled. And still for nearly two years after the Kirov murder he is not in any way held responsible for it; is not charged as connected with it either directly or indirectly. It is more than three years later when he at last faces the Court. Then he tells this strange tale of Nikolayev's arrest and release before the murder. His statement, however, does no more than make more explicit the indictment against Medved and company that they 'possessed information concerning the preparations for the attempt on S. M. Kirov'. Right from the beginning, then, the investigating authorities knew that these GPU men 'possessed information'. What information? Clearly they must have known about the arrest and release of Nikolayev, presuming that this ever took place. Yezhov had already been given a watching brief over the whole investigation of the case, and was already working to oust Yagoda. If the circumstances had been as Yagoda at first confessed at his preliminary investigation and trial, and which he later denied, would not Yezhov have quickly discovered these facts? The indictment against Medved and company shows that he would have and in fact did, unless this indictment was false and the GPU men were simply scapegoats.

The most reasonable explanation of the puzzle seems to be that these GPU men were indeed made the scapegoats. It was calculated that if Nikolayev went so far as to make an attempt on Kirov's life, this action would once and for all settle the question as to whether a 'hard' or a 'soft' policy should be pursued. It was not necessary that Kirov should actually be killed, only that Nikolayev should be given the opportunity to expose himself in the act of making an attempt. If he were arrested in the Smolny building, with a revolver and some compromising written material, a diary for example, on his person, this would suffice. This is most probably what was intended. Later, when it

became necessary to get rid of Yagoda, this intended arrest of Nikolayev was made to appear as though it had actually taken place—and used against Yagoda. Had everything gone according to plan the Leningrad GPU would have been congratulated on its vigilance. As it was they had to be sacrificed, but not too harshly dealt with, because at that time everything hung in the balance. But the fact that Nikolayev struck ‘unexpectedly’ and actually killed Kirov, did not materially alter the situation; it only strengthened the hands of those who wanted a ‘hard’ policy.

In his testimony, Yagoda himself exposes the fact that the Kirov killing could in no circumstances have benefited the so-called conspirators. He says that he told his accomplices that the killing was ‘inexpedient and unnecessary’ and would lead to his, Yagoda’s, undoing. Unnecessary! It was unnecessary to kill the very man who was in favour of making things easier for the alleged conspirators, aiding them to do what they wanted to do: get back into the Party and work there for their subversive ends. Surely these plotters were not so politically infantile as to need convincing of that. They had nothing, absolutely nothing, to gain by Kirov’s death; they had everything, as events demonstrated, to lose by it. And yet Yagoda asserts that he pleaded with them: ‘I even argued that I . . . would be the first to be held responsible. . . .’ A sound argument. What reply could have possibly been given to it. We do not know. Neither did Yagoda. All he knew was that his objections had no effect, they were not even taken into consideration. But all these men had years of revolutionary experience behind them; they did not need Yagoda to tell them what would ensue from the use of individual terrorism against a tyranny; they knew perfectly well the deadly weapon placed in the hands of those against whom the terrorist aims his blow, and they were fully aware of the

terrible repression that must inevitably follow such actions, whether successful or unsuccessful. And in spite of all this, Yagoda's warning was not even so much as considered.

Let us, for the sake of argument, discount all the evidence tending to show that Kirov was favourable to a more 'human approach to the inner problems of the ruling clique'; let us assume that he really was the foremost candidate for extermination by these terrorists so strangely unlike any other terrorists that Russia, or any other country, has ever known. Assuming this, their attitude after the deed remains inexplicable. Given the years of preparation and the nation-wide network of terrorist cells in almost every sphere of Soviet life depicted by the Prosecution, this assassination should have been the signal for an all-out struggle to overthrow the regime. Instead it was the signal for the commencement of the systematic destruction of every possible actual or potential enemy of Stalin's dictatorship. And all the members of this, according to the Soviet authorities' extremely powerful counter-revolutionary organization, not only stood passively by and watched its destruction without lifting so much as a little finger, but even did all they could to assist in their own defeat.

There was no Counsel for the Defence to put any embarrassing questions to Yagoda at his trial. To ask, for example: Did it not surprise you that you were not the first to be held responsible for Kirov's death? You were at the time so desperately sure that Yezhov would expose your part in the plot that you even tried to murder him. True, the method, spraying the curtains and walls of his room with poison, was one more likely to occur to a writer of 'penny-dreadfuls' than to a man of your considerable experience in these matters; but at least it shows that you really felt yourself on the brink of exposure. You were so

desperate that you even, according to your secretary, Bulanov, had one of the Leningrad GPU employees, Borisov, who 'had a share in the assassination of Kirov', 'accidentally' killed. How, then, do you account for the fact that, you were not dismissed until September 27, 1936: that is, nearly two years after the crime for which you were so certain you would immediately be held chiefly responsible? Even then you were not accused of the crime. It was not until April 4, 1937, that you were officially stated to have been removed from the post of Commissar for Communications for 'crimes in office'. Still no mention of the Kirov case. How did you manage to conceal your part in the plot for so long, when all your fellow-conspirators were falling around you like ninepins and showing themselves only too ready to confess to everything and implicate anyone and everyone connected remotely, at any time, with Oppositional politics?

No, there was no such Counsel for the Defence to ask these or any other questions that might have torn down the curtain of lies and half-truths and revealed the facts. There was no one to insist in particular on that most embarrassing of all questions: Who benefited from Kirov's death?

The Kirov assassination was the starting point of and the basis for eight trials: Nikolayev *et al*, December, 1934; Zinoviev and Kamenev, January, 1935; Medved *et al*, January, 1935; Kamenev *et al*, July 1935; Zinoviev and Kamenev, August, 1936; Novosibirsk Trial, November, 1936; Pyatakov-Radek *et al*, January, 1937; Bukharin-Rykov-Yagoda *et al*, March, 1938. In each of these trials 'different persons organized the assassination of Kirov by different means and for different political objectives', as Trotsky has pointed out. There is concrete evidence only in the case against the actual assassin. For those trials not held *in camera* the available official records offer no scrap of real

evidence that any of the accused had anything to do with Kirov's death. Yet this was the excuse for the trials, this was their basis—for the good and sufficient reason that this was the only real crime in the whole fantastic story of wrecking, sabotage, espionage, wholesale poisoning and so on. The entire case for the Prosecution rests upon confessions, confessions riddled through and through with manifest absurdities, contradictions and illogicalities, confessions that individually and *in toto* cannot be regarded by any balanced person as other than nightmarish phantasmagoria. The Dewey Commission investigated the Moscow Trials of 1936 and 1937 and demonstrated that they were frame-ups. The entire crazy structure of all the trials rests upon one crime committed by one person—the assassination of Kirov by Nikolayev. And the true facts of this murder are not probed, and deliberately concealed by the authorities. *

If this 'bloc of Rights and Trotskyites' of which Yagoda tells really had the power to make him do their bidding, even although he was firmly convinced he was putting his head into the noose, why did it confine its attentions to Kirov? Why did it even think of Kirov? Why did it not aim straight at the heart of the regime—at Stalin? The indictment of the third Moscow Trial itself states: that the terrorists were preparing to act 'first and foremost against Stalin, Molotov, Kaganovich and Voroshilov (note that in the first Moscow Trial Molotov's name was not included among those honoured by the terrorists' attention, because Molotov was at that time under a cloud. This fact alone is a highly significant pointer to the purely political nature of the trials). This makes sense—'first and foremost' the leaders. But what came of it? Nothing—nothing at all. In spite of the fact that the 'plotters' had the powerful Yagoda acting like their office boy, at their beck and call; in spite

of the fact that their organization had, according to the Prosecution, a nation-wide network of groups and agents; in spite of the fact that many of the accused sat side by side with Stalin for years—no one struck. Yet Yagoda testified that Yenukidze, Stalin's bosom friend, had told him towards the end of 1932 that a 'military conspiratorial organization had been set up in the Kremlin and that it was ready to effect the coup at any moment' (ibid. p. 570). (This 'evidence' is a little by-play on the affair of the secretly executed Tukhachevsky and the other Red Army leaders.) A year goes by. Nothing happens. Then there were 'preparations for a *coup d'état* entailing the arrest of the Seventeenth Congress of the Party'. Again—nothing. And so on. . . . Always preparations, always ready at a moment's notice, all set to go—but—nothing happens.

Radek let it slip out at his trial in 1937. In his last plea he says:

And what a picture did I see? The first stage, Kirov had been killed. *The years of terrorist preparation, the scores of wandering terrorist groups waiting for a chance to assassinate some leader of the party. . . .* (Official Report, Moscow Trial, January, 1937, p. 545; author's emphasis.)

There it is—'scores', literally scores, of wandering terrorist groups. It would be laughable were it not so tragic. What do these words mean if not that in spite of this vast network of determined terrorists the Party leaders were all too well guarded—all, that is, *except Kirov*. Apparently Radek, at the very centre of the conspiracy, did not know that they had as their staunch henchman none other than Yagoda himself—the man responsible for safeguarding all the leaders.

Go back to Yagoda's words. He pleaded with the plotters that the assassination of Kirov was 'inexpedient and unnecessary', that it would inevitably expose him. His fears were pooh-poohed. What assurances did the plotters give

him? None. Yet he went ahead—this man who is pre-eminently a GPU man, whose testimony in Court evinces his venomous contempt for the politicians, the 'theoreticians' (these 'babblers' he calls them). He went ahead . . . and . . . someone gave him protection. . . .

In the surrealistic canvas presented to our eyes by the trials there are elements of reality; blurred and distorted as they are, we sometimes seem to see shapes we recognize as real. Is it possible that Yagoda really did marshal a whole series of arguments against the murder of Kirov and that he received assurances that everything would be all right, assurances from someone he trusted, someone he was really close to, someone he knew had the power to make good his word?

It is not suggested that the whole gigantic frame-up was premeditated. But, on the other hand, the ground for it had not been entirely unprepared. Right back in the early days of the inner-Party struggle the Stalin faction has raised against its opponents accusations that were the seeds of the monstrous growths of later years. And in the course of the struggle those doomed to stand accused of all the crimes in the Soviet calendar had, by recantations, by public confession of their political sins, by mutual recriminations, by boundless adulation of the Leader, been prepared and prepared themselves for the final humiliation.

As has been noted, the situation prior to Kirov's death was fluid; there were two wings within the Party, which we have designated as 'hard' and 'soft'. Stalin appeared to lend ear now to the one, and now to the other. But isn't it absolutely certain that this master of intrigue, this consummate political wire-puller, this adept in the art of shady manoeuvre, must have feared a milder regime tending towards a democratization of Party life? Despite all the oft repeated declarations of loyalty on the part of those who

had at one time or another opposed him, did he really trust them? Would he not welcome the opportunity once and for all to be rid of these inveterate critics? History has given an unequivocal answer to all these questions.

The man who concocted the 'terrorist reserve centre', the 'parallel centre' of the Moscow Trials, knew a great deal about this kind of matter. The 'reserve centre', the 'parallel centre' did not exist only in his imagination; for had not one been organized along these lines—in the GPU. When Yagoda had served his turn he was replaced by Yezhov. A reserve centre had been carefully prepared against the day when it would be necessary to remove Yagoda. But Yezhov himself did not last long. Yezhov to whom Vyshinsky paid this glowing tribute:

Yagoda and his vile criminal activities have been exposed, exposed not by the treacherous intelligence service which was organized and directed against the interests of the Soviet State and our revolution by the traitor Yagoda, but by the genuine and truly Bolshevik Intelligence Service which is guided by one of Stalin's most remarkable comrades-in-arms—Nikolai Ivanovich Yezhov.

This Yezhov vanishes from the scene in December, 1938.

Being a comrade-in-arms of Stalin is truly no sinecure.

Thus all those who held any of the threads in the strange case of Sergei Mironovich Kirov, upon whose grave has been reared a mountain of skulls, are liquidated. And this fact alone speaks volumes against the only remaining man who holds all the threads. It is possible that he was all the time the only one who held all the threads, for this is one of the major aspects of the technique by which he maintains his personal power—that no one but he holds all the keys to the intrigues that pit each of his henchmen against every other, making each in the final analysis a completely isolated individual who cannot trust his closest friend. Whether Stalin deliberately planned Kirov's death or whether it was

an unfortunate 'accident' arising from a manœuvre calculated to discredit his opponents once and for all will never be known. There is no one left to tell except Stalin and he will never speak. Nor is it necessary. No confession is needed here in order to reach a verdict: for this one murder, whether deliberately connived at by him or not, was still used by him to 'justify' the judicial murder of hundreds.

CHAPTER XI

LEGALISED MURDER

They picked him up one evening as he was about to enter his lodgings. He was naturally agitated. What could he have done wrong? His knowledge of English was very limited and he could not understand what they were saying, but he knew he had to go with them. This was authority. . . . But, after all, they were American military policemen and he had been screened, received his papers. What was there to fear? Another routine check-up on Displaced Persons. Yes, they had to be careful. . . .

The jeep tore at a rocking speed through the almost deserted streets. And now, suddenly, his vague alarm turned to real fear. This was not the way to United States Headquarters! He turned to one of the escort, stated a protest, was met with a menacing glare, a snarled order, a significant lifting of the white baton. Panic mounted in him, overwhelmed him. . . . They stopped with a scream of brakes in a dark side-street and half-carried, half-dragged him towards the waiting car from which two men sprang to meet them. . . . The abyss yawned under him. . . . In a matter of seconds the transfer was over; the two cars sped away in opposite directions; the street was once more deserted; there was nothing to show that here a tragedy had been enacted.

The following evening two American military policemen would meet a man in a bar; money would change hands. . . .

On February 11, 1949, the United States authorities in Austria announced:

Two American military policemen have been arrested here on a charge of kidnapping a displaced person and 'selling' him for 7,000 schillings (about £175) to the Russians. . . . Russians whom they met in a bar in Vienna offered them big sums for various named persons, whose address and description were provided.

On August 22, 1949, a car stops in the British Section in Vienna and one of the occupants enquires of a passer-by the way to Soviet H.Q. There is a struggle within the car, a window is smashed, a man leaps out and runs. He is chased by the other men in the car, caught, beaten over the head. They try to get him back to the car, but a crowd has gathered and the captive is released. The crowd becomes threatening; stones are thrown. A platoon of British police arrives and surrounds the Russians to protect them from the fury of the people.

Dr. Karl Sondermann, an Austrian, arrested a week previously and charged with spying for the Western powers, is one of the lucky ones. . . .

An ambulance pulls up in a Berlin street. Four white-clad men get out and enter a house. They give themselves out to be asylum warders, looking for an escaped woman patient. They find the woman they are seeking; she protests that she is perfectly normal and attempts to resist. They give her an injection that renders her unconscious and carry her off. On June 4, 1949, the Paris police announce the arrest of a man, alleged to have betrayed to the Russians the hiding place of this woman, a French citizen formerly working for Soviet intelligence.

On September 21, 1949, the Austrian *Volkstimme* admits that Chief Inspector Maref, police official who had disappeared without trace more than a year before, had been arrested and sentenced by the Soviet authorities. This disappearance had been repeatedly raised in the Allied Council and always the Soviet representative, General Sviridov, had

steadfastly refused to admit any knowledge of the matter, although he promised to 'make enquiries'.

Up to the time of writing the mystery of Paul Markgraf's fate remains unsolved. One-time head of the police in the Eastern Sector of Berlin, Markgraf vanished some time in October, 1949. No official statement has ever been made about him, not even when Waldemar Schmidt was announced, in February this year, as his successor.

Dr. Edith Bone left this country in April, 1949, for a stay in Hungary of six months. On September 30 she wired to friends in London to say that she was returning and asking them to meet her at the airport. She was seen off at the Budapest airfield but did not arrive in London. Subsequent enquiries as to her whereabouts were without result. The KLM airline has no record of her ever having boarded the plane she was to have taken. In reply to a British Note (22.12.49) on this case, the Hungarian Government stated that since Dr. Bone's residence permit expired on October 1, it must be presumed that she had left the country. No trace of her has since been found.

Dr. Bone, is, or was, Hungarian by birth, and British by marriage. She was known as a Communist Party supporter, a member of the National Union of Journalists who occasionally contributed to the British *Daily Worker*. It is possible that she is being groomed for a demonstration trial. On the other hand, it is more likely that the outside world will never see her again.

She returned

Many more cases of a like nature could be cited. To give an indication of their extent attention is drawn to the statement at an Allied Council meeting on September 16, 1949, of General Keys, United States High Commissioner in Austria, that over 800 Austrian citizens had been illegally arrested during the previous four years. And in June of that year the Protestant Bishop of Berlin, Dr. Otto Dibelius,

asserted in a pastoral letter that 'thousands of men and women are disappearing from the Soviet Zone of Germany'. 'The Gestapo of recent evil memory', he charged, 'has come to life again in Department K5 of the so-called People's Police'. That summer the trial before an American Court in West Berlin of seven members of this notorious K5 department of the secret police added weight to his charge, and gave a brief, but revealing glimpse of the methods employed: corruption, blackmail, kidnapping, murder (see the report of this trial in *Tribune*, September 30, 1949, by Melvin J. Lasky).

On April 23 of this year, the trial in Salzburg, Austria, of two Austrian men and a German girl on the charge of trying to kidnap a displaced person and hand him over to the Russians ended in a verdict of guilty against all the defendants. Gisela Sell and Rudolf Weichselberger were sentenced to seven and eight years respectively; Michael Berger to eight years, six months. Another accused, Max Bair, who had been released on a bail of 75,000 *schillings*, did not appear in court. According to *The Times*, April 24, 1950, Bair held a press conference in a café in the Russian Sector on the day before the trial. Bair is an Austrian Communist who spent many years in Russia. He returned to Austria with the Russian troops in 1945 and became Party secretary for the Tyrol region.

In order to make the situation perfectly clear to the reader we shall cite the case of Karl Fischer.

In 1937 Karl Fischer was condemned by the Schuschnigg regime in Austria to five years' penal servitude for anti-Fascist activity and membership of a banned anti-Stalin group of Communists. Freed by a general amnesty in 1938, he fled to France as a political refugee. In 1943 he was handed over by the Vichy authorities to the Nazis, and was held in the Buchenwald concentration camp until

liberated by the Americans, when he returned to his mother's home in Austria. His mother had herself been sentenced to five years' imprisonment by the Nazis for anti-Fascist propaganda.

Fischer found work in Linz, in the American Zone, first in the French Liaison Service as secretary to Captain Rozan, then in the *Arbeiterkammer*. His immediate superior in the *Arbeiterkammer* was a Herr Strasser, member of the Socialist Party and also of the organization known as 'The Friends of the Soviet Union'. Fischer himself became active in the Socialist Party.

On the evening of January 22, 1947, Fischer went to keep an appointment in the Russian Zone. He never returned.

Some time before, a girl-friend, Vera Kerschbaumer, had warned him that the Communist Party was taking a close interest in him. This girl was the daughter of the editor of the local Communist newspaper, *Neue Zeit*, and herself a member of the Party, employed in a Communist bookshop in Linz. She told Fischer that Herr Haider, secretary-general of the Communist Party in Upper Austria, had suggested that she take advantage of her friendship with Fischer to report on him. She refused to do this. Fischer was then warned by another member of the Party to break off relations with Vera—'otherwise he would take the consequences'. Fischer ignored the warning, remained friendly with the girl, trying to win her away from the Communists. Within the Socialist Party he continued to be a persistent opponent of Communist Party manoeuvres to infiltrate and dominate that party.

Around five o'clock on January 22, 1947, he accompanied Vera to her home in the Russian Zone. According to Vera, he left her at a quarter to seven. From that point on, all trace of him was lost.

Socialist deputies, the State Secretary, Herr Mantler (who

knew Fischer personally), the Mayor of Linz, the Austrian delegate to UNO in London, Dr. Koref, and the Socialist Minister of the Interior were all notified of his disappearance, but it does not appear that any noteworthy activity ensued. Herr Strasser volunteered the information that shortly after five o'clock on the evening of the disappearance, a man with a 'foreign accent' had telephoned the office asking for Fischer. He thought that this might be a clue: perhaps Fischer had been picked up by the Americans or the French? On February 3, 1947, the following notice appeared in the Communist *Neue Zeit*:

PUZZLING DISAPPEARANCE

Linz—Since January 22, 1947, the twenty-nine-year-old employee, Karl Fischer, of 11 Nietzschestrasse, Linz, has been missing. He is 5 ft. 6 in. tall, has blond hair, blue eyes. He was dressed in a blue-grey overcoat, brown patterned suit, dark-blue shirt and tie to match. He was last seen in Poestlingberg. Information to the Criminal Police or the nearest Security Service Station.

In the light of our information on the kidnapping activities of Russian agents, information which could hardly have not also been in the possession of the editor of this paper, this notice has a mocking ring. Its hypocrisy is even more apparent when one knows that during Fischer's stay in Buchenwald the Communists there had more than once tried to 'liquidate' him, but thanks to the protection of Benedict Kautsky, son of the well-known Socialist theoretician, Karl Kautsky, he survived. The reader may find this incredible, imagining that all inmates of such camps would be united against the common enemy. This was not so however. On this point we have the very precise evidence of Ernst Federn (Prisoner No. 2402, Buchenwald), a psycho-analyst and former colleague of Freud: 'Camp political life was poisoned, however, by ridiculous conflicts between different factions, feuds which sometimes led to

the actual destruction of opponents through the aid of the S.S. (*The Terror as a System: The Concentration Camp*, State Hospitals Press, N.Y., p. 26; reprinted from the *Psychiatric Quarterly Supplement*, Vol. 22, pp. 52-86, Part 1, 1948.)

The latest news of Karl Fischer, received by the author from private sources, is that he is now serving a fifteen-year sentence in a Russian concentration camp.

Once again it must be emphasized that these methods of dealing with political opponents are not isolated and temporary expedients necessitated by exceptional circumstances and employed only with the greatest reluctance and distaste. On the contrary, they form part and parcel of a deliberate and well thought out system. With the Soviet occupation forces in Eastern Europe came also the GPU. The lists of Wanted Persons they brought with them contained the names and descriptions not only of war criminals but also of others who by no stretch of the imagination could be so classified. In the course of time new names were added to these lists. They came to include not only refugees from the Soviet Union, but also citizens of the occupied countries known or suspected as opponents of Soviet policy.

The war necessarily slowed down the international work of the GPU, or rather, that aspect of it that is not destined for the public. The espionage apparatus, directed against its war-time allies, remained intact, as the case of Dr. Klaus Emil Fuchs, Communist Party member and eminent atomic scientist, showed. But the tasks, kidnappings and murders, assigned to it abroad as 'by-products' of the purges inside the Soviet Union, had, with one or two notable exceptions (Trotsky, Krivitsky), been completed before the signing of the Nazi-Soviet Pact, which was the 'Go' sign for Hitler. The post-war situation brought new political problems, but the methods used to solve them are not in essence different from those already noted; the

only difference lies in the fact that the post-war situation has vastly strengthened the power of the GPU outside the Soviet Union, and given it the possibility of acting 'legally', that is, with the connivance and support, and within the framework of the state apparatus of the satellite countries.

In order that the states brought within the Soviet 'sphere of interest' should be economically and politically integrated with the Soviet Union—that is, in the final analysis, should be rendered completely subservient to it—it was necessary to eliminate any who might serve as a rallying-point in a struggle for independence, or for dependence on some other, 'competing' power. An early example of the Soviet pattern of behaviour in this connection, its utter lack of scruple, its cynical contempt for moral considerations, its reliance solely upon duplicity and fraud, is seen in the case of the fifteen Polish leaders of the underground struggle against Hitler. Early in March, 1945, M. Janowski, Deputy Prime Minister of the Polish Underground Administration, received an invitation from a certain Russian Colonel named Pimonov, ostensibly acting on behalf of the Soviet Military Authorities, to discuss with Soviet representatives the future political set-up in Poland. The leaders of the political parties and General Okulicki, commander of the Underground Army, were included in this invitation. A promise of safe conduct was given. After a series of talks the first official conference was arranged. At this conference it was stated from the Russian side that Marshal Zhukov, who had full plenipotentiary powers, or his representative, General Ivanov, would be present. Instead of being taken to Marshal Zhukov's headquarters, however, the Polish representatives were taken to Moscow and driven in luxurious cars—straight to the Lubianka Prison. In due course they were brought to trial—charged

with sabotage in the rear of the Red Army! With one exception all of them pleaded 'Guilty in part' (this was not a confession trial proper) and were sentenced to terms of imprisonment ranging from four months to ten years. Among those sentenced was the representative of the Polish Socialist Party, Mr. Puzak, one-time political prisoner of the Tsar, who had spent four years of a long term of imprisonment chained in a cell of the notorious Schlüsselburg fortress. He received a sentence of eighteen months. General Okulicki and Deputy Prime Minister Janowski received ten and eight years respectively. The one Pole who refused to confess, Mr. Stypulkowski, received a term of four months, eventually returned to Poland and from there escaped to the West. His description of the methods employed to extort 'confessions' fully confirms the evidence submitted to the Dewey Commission that investigated the Moscow Trials.

Right up to the moment when the cell doors clanged to behind them, these Poles were treated by the Russians with every consideration; relations between the two parties were cordial in the extreme. Yet the whole affair, from the letter of invitation, the series of talks, to the proposed conference with Marshal Zhukov, was an elaborately organized farce, played out by the GPU with profound contempt for world public opinion and cynical rejection of the elementary decencies of civilized behaviour. At the trial M. Stypulkowski pointed out that the accused were in court only because they had been prepared to accept an invitation to take part in discussions with the Soviet authorities. Would saboteurs have accepted Marshal Zhukov's invitation? 'Who invited you for these talks?' asked the President, Colonel-General Ulrich. Stypulkowski replied that the invitation had come through Colonel Pimonov on behalf of General Ivanov, and Ulrich answered cynically: 'Do you

really believe that Pimonov and Ivanov exist at all? The NKVD (*i.e.* GPU, author) merely tricked you.'

Had the Soviet Government wished to openly declare to the world the utter worthlessness of its pledged word, it could have devised no better means than the action taken against these Poles.

Already then in March, 1945, the Soviet Government gave a sufficiently clear indication of the fact that its methods had not changed; already it demonstrated for those with eyes to see that its chief governmental arm was the secret police. The trial of the Poles foreshadowed the later trials in Eastern Europe. For the GPU would in due course, with the consolidation of its power in the satellite States, be in a position to export the Moscow Trials to the territory of Europe, while at the same time, in Austria and Germany, still having recourse to the kidnapping and spiriting away of its opponents.

The defection of Yugoslavia from the concert of satellite states (a serious blow that may yet prove fatal to Soviet policy) speeded up the holding of such trials, which would have taken place even without Tito's 'treachery', although, of course, the confessions would have been different. This rift in the lute exposed in the sharpest possible manner the weaknesses of the regimes and made urgent action imperative if the rot were to be stopped. Tito's assassination was undoubtedly placed on the order of the day. It remains on the order of the day. And one purpose of the trials has been to create the atmosphere necessary to an *attentat*. *

The trials of former leading Communists in Eastern Europe are of major significance because, in the first place, they demonstrate that 'Titoism' is not a purely Yugoslav

phenomenon; and, in the second place, they reveal the essential nature of the regimes in the satellite states. Whatever the final socio-economic results of Tito's policy for Yugoslavia, it is evident that his main political strength rests upon nationalism. Nationalism has also shown itself in the Bulgarian, Hungarian and Polish Communist Parties, and without doubt it also exists in those of Czechoslovakia, Rumania and Albania (the execution of General Kochi Djodje, June 13, 1949, former General Secretary of the Albanian C.P. points to this). No sooner do Stalin's men come to power in their respective countries than some of them are suspected of trying to cut the wires that make them dance, and immediately the iron hand in the very threadbare velvet glove is revealed. It is highly doubtful if either Kostov or Rajk thought themselves strong enough to pursue a policy independent of their master. But Tito had what they lacked—a popular following, which made a break with Stalin possible. True, he made the break reluctantly, the intransigence all on the side of the Soviet Union, but still, he made it. And the danger that others might be strengthened by his example was too great to be ignored. The remaining Communist Parties must be shown who was master—and at once, in no uncertain manner. So the very significant fact of Tito's defiance of Stalin was followed by the no less significant revelation that the Communist Parties are merely means to an end, and, that end achieved, they can be, virtually, if not actually, dispensed with. True, so far it is only a question of the execution or imprisonment of top-ranking leaders. But, just as the Communist Party in Russia has been destroyed in all but name, so it will be destroyed in the satellite states. As in Russia, itself, the real rulers will henceforth maintain themselves on the basis of the GPU. The situation in Eastern Europe has also destroyed the myth of Soviet internationalism, and revealed

Soviet policy as in direct line of succession with the 'expansionism' of Tsarism. As the hold of other empires weakens, as they retreat, make concessions, the new imperialist power strides ruthlessly forward.

The trials of former Communist leaders are therefore of greater educational value than the trials of those who must inevitably be opponents of the new regimes. All these trials have, of course, the same symptomatic importance, since they all express the same drive towards a totalitarian state, rigidly controlled by Russian satraps, and politically and economically isolated from the rest of the world. But it would be an error to assume from the measures taken against the Church, notably in the cases of Cardinal Mindszenty and the Protestant pastors, that the destruction of religion as such is aimed at. The Soviet Government has shown its willingness to foster the Greek Orthodox Church and to use it as an instrument of its policy, both domestic and foreign. Elsewhere, in Czechoslovakia, for instance, it seeks to erect its own state Church. Provided that a religious body is prepared to be wholly subservient to the Soviet state, and willing to use its influence on its behalf, no action is taken against it—on the contrary, it may even be assisted. Action taken against the Church is not, therefore, dictated by a desire to suppress religious teachings as such; does not spring from some doctrinaire adherence to a set of principles (principles, Marxist or any other, are the last ground one should examine for an explanation of Soviet Policy), but is aimed at binding the Church to the state apparatus and making it a tool of that apparatus. The broad purpose is the same in all the trials and it is not necessary here to consider the Church trials in detail, since the ultimate and sharpest expression of this purpose is seen in the judicial murder of the Soviet Government's own leading agents suspected of seeking

something less for their countries than absolute colonial dependence upon the 'beloved Fatherland'.

In whatever direction the GPU strikes its purpose is simply to root out and destroy all those who are political non-conformists, and such persons are most dangerous precisely in those parties through which Russian control achieves political form and substance. The use of that particularly Russian concoction, the confessional trial, is itself sufficient to expose this control.

Today no one can question the source of inspiration of the Rajk Trial in Hungary, the Kostov Trial in Bulgaria, or the forthcoming Gomulka* Trial (if he has not already proved too hard a nut to crack) in Poland. Writing in *Borba* (September 22, 1949), Mosha Pijadje, chief theoretician of the Yugoslav C.P., said that 'The Budapest trial recalls the 1936 trial in the Soviet Union, the stage managers of which have been able to give the organizers of the Budapest trial the benefit of their rich experience'. This admission that the Moscow Trials were frame-ups comes a little late in the day from one who was for years a cover-up man for these very 'stage-managers'. Nevertheless, it is to be welcomed. It is, however, hardly necessary to call witnesses to the fact that the Rajk trial, and all the others, were staged by the GPU. All the hall-marks are present. Once again there is no evidence against the accused except their own confessions (the 'document' which occasionally figures in them will not bear serious investigation, and would, in any case, be meaningless without the self-inculpatory testimony of the accused). Once again the Public Prosecutor, or the President of the Court, gives the accused their cues by means of leading questions, prompts

* Up to the time of writing, Gomulka was still reported as not under arrest. It is hardly likely, however, that his 'disgrace' is not the first stage down the path to destruction. A public trial will depend on both his 'co-operation' and internal propaganda needs.

them when they forget their lines, warns them when they are in danger of going outside the prepared script; and once again the Defence abjectly apologizes for daring to undertake the task, finds it necessary to spend time justifying its presence in Court, and then proceeds to underline the guilt of its clients. But the most characteristic feature of all is the nature of the confessions themselves; for they are never simply admittances of guilt, but are always propaganda speeches in defence of the accusers, in defence of the regime, of all that the accused are alleged to have plotted and fought against so persistently, so tenaciously, and for so long. One and all—life-long Communists, business men, religious leaders—they phrase their confessions to harmonize with whatever happens to be the political line of the regime, that is—the Soviet Union. One and all they burn with the desire to aid the prosecution's work, which is not to dispense justice, but to propagate a political viewpoint. A bargain has been struck beforehand. When the accused come into Court it is not their defence that interests them—they have already been found guilty. What interests them is only the sentence they will receive; the treatment of their families, the welfare of a loved one. By complying with the requirements of the regime they grasp at the only chance left. The speeches for the Defence (what a mockery of the word!) and the final pleas boil down to appeals for mercy because the accused have faithfully carried through their allotted roles; Counsel for the Defence says, in effect—Without the full co-operation of the accused this demonstration could never have been held; they therefore deserve the reward promised them—leniency. Typifying all these appeals are the following words of Robert Vogeler's Defence Counsel: 'Let me call the attention of the Honoured Court to the contrite confession with which my defendant exposed this whole intricate criminal act and to the manly statement which . . .

showed sincere repentance. . . .' (Official Report, Budapest, 1950, p. 260.)

The fabric of these trials is skilfully woven but falls apart at the slightest touch. Look at Laszlo Rajk's case. He stated at his trial that

Tito and Rankovich worked in close and organic co-operation with the American information service. Regarding their close and organic co-operation I had various facts at my disposal. There were first of all my experiences in the French internment camp when I personally convinced myself that the persons who fill the key positions in the Yugoslavia of today had been active agents of the Deuxième Bureau and arrived home with the help of the Gestapo. Of course, the Deuxième Bureau had already during the war closely co-operated with the American information organization. (L. Rajk and his Accomplices before the People's Court, Budapest, 1949, p. 49.)

Now what exactly were his 'experiences' in the internment camp? Rajk testified that

. . . as a former International Brigadier, who carried on Trotskyist activities, I was on several occasions called in and asked for information about what was happening in the camp by the officer of the Deuxième Bureau. . . . I have to add that for the French officer to call me in it was not necessary for him to know my past, because in general the Trotskyists always, and everywhere, internationally, worked in close contact with the police. . . . I told the French officer, the head of the Deuxième Bureau, that a strong Yugoslav Trotskyist group was active in the camp, and roughly who were the leaders of the group. . . . The officer . . . told me that he knew about the activities of this group, and further, that they did some things with his approval and what is more, sometimes on his instructions. I . . . once saw Kosta-Nadj, Vukomanovich, Stefanovich, Milich and others, the leaders of the above Yugoslav Trotskyist group who were also going to the Deuxième Bureau officer or coming from there. From this it became clear to me that these Yugoslavs were, in fact, the organized men of the Deuxième Bureau, and were carrying out its instructions just as I was. (op. cit., pp. 39-40.)

Let us examine this statement more closely.

First, it became clear to him that the Yugoslavs were agents of the Deuxième Bureau because he 'once' saw them either coming from or going to an interview with the French Officer. On the basis of such reasoning (?) it could be argued that any Communist interrogated by military intelligence is automatically recruited as an agent. Second, why was this evidence of interrogation necessary for him to realize that they had been recruited? Did he not in the same breath state that the Trotskyists 'always and everywhere, internationally, worked in close contact with the police'? And since, as he himself affirmed, he carried on Trotskyist activities and was 'in a way' a leader of the Yugoslav group of internees engaged in the same work, he of course must have known of the connections with the Deuxième Bureau—if they existed. Besides the inner knowledge he must have had if he had really been working together with these alleged other agents, the mere fact of an interview with the Deuxième Bureau officer would be insignificant. Every inmate of the camp would at some time or other have been interrogated by an intelligence officer. Following Rajk's line of reasoning that would make them all 'Trotskyists' working for the police—a claim which Rajk would hardly have cared to make. Then why drag in this absurd 'evidence' of an interview with the French officer? Obviously for the simple reason that this was the only 'evidence' there was.

Yet on the basis of these 'experiences' Rajk 'personally convinced' himself that the Yugoslavs were agents of the Deuxième Bureau. And since the Deuxième Bureau had 'already during the war' worked with 'American information organizations' then they must also, don't you see, have been agents of the Americans. But although Rajk first of all convinced himself of all this between 1939 and 1941, he,

according to his own later words, did not in 1945 'yet know that they worked in close co-operation with the Americans' (op. cit., p. 50). In addition, the Yugoslavs worked with the Gestapo, which was such a comic-opera organization that it got them back to Yugoslavia to help organize the guerilla warfare against the German occupation! But of course, this apparent absurdity is explained away by the fact that Tito never really fought the German occupation forces; this is all an invention on the part of McLean and other interested persons. And, in any case, the fact that McLean and Randolph Churchill were at Tito's partisan headquarters proved that Tito was and remains an agent of the British. It's all so simple if you know the recipe.

As a further exposure of the completely phoney nature of the confessions which serve the GPU executioners as excuses for liquidating opponents, take the following:

When Rajk went to Spain to join the Rakosi Battalion he 'avoided the central organ of the French Party which supervised politically all those leaving for Spain' (op. cit., p. 38). For he was, you understand, going to Spain on orders from the police, for whom he was working, in order to discover who was in the Rakosi Battalion and at the same time to 'disrupt' it. As soon as he gets to the Rakosi Battalion he is made its party secretary, and immediately he starts his 'Trotskyist activity' and gets himself expelled from the Party. Never was there such an obliging police spy!—obliging to those he was supposed to be spying against! Instead of covering up and being more orthodox than the orthodox, a matter of elementary common-sense for any self-respecting police agent, he comes out right into the open and actually gets himself expelled on the gravest of all charges. The reader will by now be well aware of the consequences of expulsion on such a charge in such circumstances. Yet nothing happened to Rajk. He continued to

serve in the Battalion and carry on his 'disruptive' work. To underline the magnitude of his crimes, he even goes so far as to suggest that his activities contributed in a large measure to the defeat at the battle of the Ebro:

. . . the result of all this political activity . . . was that the efficiency of the Rakosi Battalion—the battalion fought in a very important section of the front—was very much weakened just before one of the most decisive battles of the Spanish Republican troops. (op. cit., pp. 38-39).

Yet this quite open 'counter-revolutionary' work, open enough to get him expelled from the Party, was then dismissed by all concerned as a matter of no importance. The Party Secretary of the Rakosi Battalion expelled for Trotskyism!—and the matter never goes any further! It is, of course, possible that he was actually expelled, but in any case it is clear that the dispute, if it existed, must have been in the nature of a personal squabble rather than a serious political difference. The matter of the expulsion, if it ever took place, never went any further; it was not reported to the top Party organs or in any way publicized—as it would have been if it had really been the serious matter Rajk and his judges tried to make it. Had he really been expelled on a serious count it is doubtful if he would have got out of Spain alive; certainly he would never have afterwards risen to the key position in the Communist apparatus in Hungary.

Desperately endeavouring to give some semblance of reality to his self-portrait as a traitor Rajk only succeeds in exposing his confession as false. He says, for example, that he 'deserted' from the Battalion in February, 1939, and hastily adds 'before the fighting was over'—words that appear at first glance to be redundant. If he deserted, then he deserted. Why was the addition necessary? (The Indictment, by the way, says that he 'escaped', not 'deserted'—

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another small, but not unimportant contradiction.) Because Rajk knew well enough that the battle of the Ebro was the final decisive military defeat of the Republican military forces. The International Brigade, of which the Rakosi Battalion was a part, was officially disbanded in October, 1938; the British and French Governments recognized Franco on February 27, 1939, the very month in which Rajk confesses to deserting. Long before this recognition the Spanish-French frontier had been thronged with thousands of 'deserters' like Rajk. If Rajk, this alleged counter-revolutionary Trotskyist expellee, had really deserted, how eagerly it would have been seized upon by the Communist cell in the internment camp to discredit him and Trotskyism in general! But, of course, in February, 1939, no one raised the question.

Rajk had to lie about this because the Prosecution had to present every single public action of his in a new light, in the light of Rajk the traitor, instead of Rajk the beloved revolutionary leader. Once again the old familiar pattern of the Moscow Trials.

Take another interesting little lie from among the sum total of lies which compose his whole confession. While in French internment, he says, the Americans attempted to 'organize' him as a member of the American intelligence agency.

It was in the Vernet internment camp that an American citizen called Field, who was as far as I know (why this caution?) the head of the American intelligence agency for Central and Eastern Europe, visited me in the internment camp after the end of the Civil War. He referred to an instruction he had received from Washington, that 'he should speak with me and help me to get out of the camp and return home to Hungary. He even told me that they would like to send me home because as an agent who had not been exposed I would, working in the Party according to the instructions received from the Americans, disorganize and dissolve

the Party and possibly even get the Party' (the 'disorganized and dissolved' Party?) into my hands.

Now it appears from this that the American intelligence was very well informed about Rajk. Instructions about him even came from Washington! Yet a long time after, in 1945, when he was back in Hungary, the Americans appear to have mislaid this information, since the American agent collecting information only discovered that Rajk was a police agent through a message from another Hungarian police agent. But even more strange is the reference to the mysterious Mr. Field.

According to the Indictment, Noel H. Field was 'one of the chiefs in Switzerland of the American espionage organization known as the "Office of Statagic Services"'. Noel H. Field, his wife Hertha Field, and his brother Herman Field disappeared from sight in 1949; the last known trace of them was in Warsaw. Noel Field was born in London of American parents; his wife is of German extraction; they worked together in Switzerland for an American refugee-aid society called the Unitarian Service Committee. A German anti-Fascist refugee, writing in the French journal *Confrontation Internationale* (November-December, 1949), relates how he met this couple in Geneva and how his suspicions were aroused by the fact that Field, ostensibly working on behalf of a religious refugee-aid organization, was in close contact with Anton Ackermann and Walter Frisch, leaders of the German Communists in emigration, and with Leon Nicole, leader of the Swiss Communists. A further pointer to Field's political affiliation was the fact that his secretary was a well-known German Stalinist. But quite positive evidence that Field was himself a Stalinist, using the Unitarian Service Committee as a cover for his political activities, comes from Jules Humbert-Droz, foundation member of the Third

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International (Comintern), now secretary of the Swiss Socialist Party. In the Swiss weekly *Travail* Humbert-Droz denounced the Budapest trial and gave the following facts about Field:

Another name cited by the indictment: it is that of Noel Field, designated as the head of the American spy system in Switzerland, who had given out instructions to American spies among the Yugoslav and Hungarian internees in the camps in Southern France.

I knew Noel Field very well at the time. He was a member of the Swiss Communist Party and an agent of the American churches to aid refugees in the South of France. He intervened, as an American and as a church representative, with the Vichy government to save a great number of German and Italian Communists who were under the threat of being given up to the Gestapo by the Petain Government. He helped hundreds of militants in the camps, distributing food and transmitting messages. He helped a large number to hide or to flee to the United States or elsewhere. He did this work in close connection with the Swiss Communist Party and the German and Italian emigrés. Field had previously rendered great services to the Soviet Union.*

It is amazing now to see those people denounced as American spies who in all good faith utilized the services of the Communist Noel Field at that time.

* Certain high functionaries of the German and Italian Communist Parties who owe their lives to Noel Field could have a bad quarter of an hour in that case.

It is clear, therefore, that Field was a Stalinist agent and that it was in this capacity that he visited Rajk—or, if he did not visit him, at least tried to pull some strings on his behalf—when he was in the Vernet internment camp. But was he a double agent? Was he at the same time in the service of the American intelligence? The only evidence to support such a view is Rajk's assertion that Field tried to

* Those acquainted with the work of Stalinist-dominated refugee committees—particularly in Czechoslovakia and Poland, where the Fields also worked—know how the Communists used their influence to hinder anti-Communist political refugees, even denouncing them as 'Gestapo agents'.

'organize' him 'as a member of the American intelligence service'. This was 'after the end of the Civil War'. It was not until more than six years later, in August-September, 1945, that the Americans allegedly really did 'organize' him, as a result of the fact that Kovach, 'a member of the American military mission . . . received a message from Sombor-Schweinitzer . . . through which he discovered that I had worked for the Horthy police'. But how explain this six-year delay in making contact? And if the delay can be attributed to objective difficulties, it still remains to be explained why Field, allegedly head of the American intelligence for Central and Eastern Europe, did not make any report on this eminently important contact; that, in fact, he forgot all about him! But if Washington had instructed Field to contact Rajk in 1939, it would not have been necessary for Kovach to wait for Sombor-Schweinitzer to tell him that Rajk was a police agent—Kovach would already know from Washington that he could be 'organized'. There is only one explanation for this apparent amateurish functioning of American intelligence: Field never received any instructions from Washington about Rajk, Field did not try to 'organize' Rajk, and Rajk never was in the service of the Americans. There is also only one explanation for Field's disappearance: from his work in Switzerland and in France among the refugees—in carrying out which he, as a Communist Party member, acted in accordance with instructions from the Communist apparatus—he was in a position to tear to shreds the whole flimsy fabric of the Rajk trial. He knew too much! It was impossible to take a chance on his keeping his mouth shut. If ever he should come to figure in a 'Moscow Trial' it will not be before he is thoroughly broken (both his wife and his brother have also disappeared). But it is more than possible that the Field family will not be heard of again.

Everyone concerned in the Rajk Trial—President, Prosecutor, the Defence, defendants and witnesses, accusers and accused alike—are all unanimously agreed upon the purpose of the trial and bend all their efforts to achieve this purpose. A truly striking example of this obviously pre-arranged agreement is seen in the following. Asked by the President of the Court what was the standpoint of the so-called Trotskyist group that carried out political activity in the French internment camp, Rajk replies: 'I could outline the essence in a few words: by saying that it was a refutation and disruption of everything which is in the interests of the revolutionary working-class movement, on a political basis that completely lacked principle' (ibid., p. 39). Remember that this is supposed to be a self-confessed police spy, an agent of American imperialism speaking. Yet he does not talk a bit like one; he talks like a Stalinist. Here is the man who 'wanted to restore capitalism'—defending Stalinism! . . . He does not simply 'confess', he makes a propaganda speech in favour of everything against which he has secretly struggled for years; he denounces with virtuous indignation his and his fellow-conspirators' lack of 'principle', proclaims the Stalinists as the sole true defenders of the interests of the working-class movement. . . . Here in this single reply to the President's question is revealed the pre-arranged agreement of the accused with the political aims of the trial. Tito, the Yugoslav regime, British and American imperialism—these are the targets against which all concerned direct a concerted ideological bombardment in strict conformity with the extant political line of the Soviet Union. On the one side Stalin, the beloved leader, the Socialist fatherland, the People's Democracies tenderly sheltered under its protective wing—the forces of light; on the other hand Tito, the Trotskyists, American and British imperialism—the forces of darkness. Once again—the

Moscow Trials; with, naturally, a fresh cast and the plot adapted to the exigencies of the post-war world.

As has been emphasized here, a principal charge made against the disgraced Communist leaders was that they were 'bourgeois nationalists'—mostly the 'bourgeois', is dispensed with. Here lies the real core of the trouble. Stalin, creator of the theory of 'socialism in one country', is mortally afraid of being hoist with his own petard. Nationalism for Russia—good, excellent! But nationalism for Tito? Socialism for Yugoslavia? Anathema! A deadly sin! No! The satellite states will either bask in the sun of Stalin or they will be cast into the outer darkness. Nationalist Russia, posing as the standard-bearer of revolutionary internationalism,* suppresses with an iron hand all manifestations of nationalism—that is, of desire for political independence—in the countries under her domination. Yet on the international field Stalinism has in the past built up, and continues to build up, its mass influence by posing as the disinterested champion of all those 'backward' lands struggling to free themselves from imperialist domination. Unfortunately for this claim, the contrast between words and deeds has been thrown into bold relief in Eastern Europe. Before the conquest of power by the Communists, the fight for 'national independence' was a patriotic duty; under this standard all men of good-will could unite. After the conquest of power nationalism became a crime—for the simple reason that then nationalism must necessarily be the enemy of the new foreign master that had only too evidently replaced the old, and in a much more direct form.

This inner-party struggle centering around the question of national independence comes out very plainly in the statement issued by the plenum of the Central Committee

* What the Soviet Government today denounces as 'cosmopolitanism' is in reality the spirit of internationalism.

* Kostov
CC | of the Bulgarian C.P. on March 26-27, 1949, when the case of Traicho Kostov was considered (Report in *Rabotnichesko Delo*, April 5, 1949). It is evident from this report that a fractional struggle did in fact exist in the party. The plenum resolved: 'To explain to the party organization, and in the press, the relevant text of the party constitution concerning party discipline, and forbidding the creation of fractions and conducting of fractional activity in the party.' Nothing human is alien to politics and without doubt personal antipathies and ambitions entered into the dispute, but the manner in which it developed and terminated shows that the individuals concerned were felt to express more than merely their own feelings and convictions; i.e. were regarded as reflecting the pressure of nationalist sentiment in the country. In this first openly-revealed stage of the struggle Kostov is still referred to as 'Comrade'; he is accused only of 'crude political and anti-party mistakes' (author's emphasis) and nowhere is espionage, sabotage and wrecking mentioned. His attitude, especially on the question of 'giving economic information to Soviet representatives' was 'insincere and unfriendly'; he tolerated 'nationalist tendencies in the State apparatus and personally encouraged them by his incorrect anti-party orders'. As a result Kostov was relieved of his posts as Vice-President of the Council of Ministers and President of the Committee for Economic and Financial Affairs and also taken off the Politbureau. Still he was not arrested. Instead he was given the post of director of the national library. Here, too, the familiar technique of the GPU. Dimitrov was then still alive, although already in the Soviet Union for the cure from which he was not to return; his chance of recovery not considered very great, since Kolarov was already referred to by Sofia radio as President of the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs (in a domestic language broadcast—not

illegally

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subsequently repeated in the English language broadcast). The possibility that Kostov felt he might enlist the support of his close friend Dimitrov is indicated by the following point from the statement of the Central Committee already quoted: 'He did not refrain from attempting to hammer a wedge into the Bolshevik unity of the party and into its solidarity round our teacher and leader, Comrade Georgi Dimitrov.' It appears that Dimitrov was not even aware of Kostov's arrest later, since his last message to the Politbureau, in June, did not contain a word against Kostov. *

At any rate it was not until after Dimitrov's death that the stage was ready for Kostov's trial. And then Kostov went and spoiled the whole show; he refused to adhere to the confession made during the preliminary investigation. He denied that he had been at any time a police spy or an agent of western imperialism.

In seeking to defend the methods of the Mindszenty trial the Hungarian authorities replied to the charge that no defence was available to the Cardinal, by quoting *The Times* correspondent: 'Mindszenty's words were deliberate and clear.' Kostov's denial of his guilt was also deliberate and clear. But in the one case this was proof of the accused's guilt, in the other it is—still proof of his guilt. By deliberately and clearly admitting the charges against him, Mindszenty proved the correctness of those charges; by doing the opposite Kostov 'only confirmed the charges laid against him' (*Soviet Monitor*, 11, 135, p. 2). Kostov 'insolently [*sic*] denied the evidence written in his own hand during the investigation' (*ibid*, p. 1). Therefore he was guilty. Nothing could better bring out the position of the accused. 'Heads, I win; tails you lose' says the Prosecution.

Kostov's public refutation of the accusations and his withdrawal of the confession extorted from him during the

preliminary investigation was a severe blow to the Prosecution. This had not been anticipated. Since he at the last moment refused to play the role allotted him, the Court put no more questions to him. Instead, the confession extracted behind the scenes was read *in toto*, after which his 'cross-examination'—which had never really begun, since he refused at the outset to give the right answers—was 'discontinued', to quote the official Report.

In his final plea Kostov stood firm. 'I consider it the duty of my conscience to declare to the Court and through it to Bulgarian public opinion,' he said, 'that I have never been at the service of British intelligence, that I have never taken part in the criminal conspiratorial plans of Tito and his clique. . . .' The President interrupts him—'What do you want of the Court?' He attempts to resume, is again interrupted—'What do you want of the Court?' He finishes the sentence expressing his 'respect and esteem for the Soviet Union', and the President sharply calls on the next accused. What, indeed, did the author of the Bulgarian Communist Constitution, adopted in December, 1947, want of the Court? Justice?

The curtain falls, but the last act is played out behind it, hidden from the public gaze. Sentenced to death, Kostov pleads for mercy from his old comrades, 'realizing barely at the last moment the incorrectness' of his conduct before the Supreme Court, 'which was of a nature to inflict harm on the People's Republic of Bulgaria and to stain its People's Democratic Government'. In the darkness of the condemned cell he retreats from the position that an open Court and the light of day gave him temporary courage to adopt, and once again confirms his 'confession'. In vain. The appeal is rejected and his execution takes place the same day.

The authorities thought it advisable to publish Kostov's

last pleas for mercy in facsimile; so acutely aware were they that this tardy repentance must inevitably appear peculiar to say the least.

There was no more evidence against Kostov than there was against Rajk. Their real 'crime', however, lay in that they were considered capable of aspiring to follow in Tito's footsteps, that is, of not wanting to take orders from the masters of their respective countries. For this they were judicially murdered. It is true that the actual evidence demonstrating their reluctance to take orders was extremely meagre. But, after Tito's defection, the GPU could afford to take no chances. In sifting through the past records of all those holding responsible positions, the slightest hint of 'deviationism', the smallest suggestion of any reluctance to carry out without question the commands of those who rule from behind the scenes, any indication that in trade relationships with the Soviet Union it was possible to do more than simply accept what the Soviet Union offered, would stand out, in the light of Tito's defection, like a hovel in a Potemkin village. Any further spread of Titoism would mean that some GPU chiefs would answer with their heads. It was better to take no chances. Moreover, a few victims in high places would serve to terrorize the Communist Parties of the satellite countries, forcibly demonstrate who was the real master and at the same time strengthen that mastery. The question of the guilt or innocence of the accused was of secondary importance. After the Tito affair it was absolutely imperative that some high-up Communist officials, the more prominent the better, be cut down *pour décourager les autres*.

This is not to say, of course, that none of those accused in these trials were guilty. One of the tricks of the Moscow Trial technique is to make an amalgam, throwing together disgraced Communists with avowed enemies of the regimes,

✓ adventurers and agents-provocateurs. It would not be difficult to discover in Eastern Europe plenty of people who by the nature of their former social position are bound to be inimical, if only in their thoughts, to the present regime. And where the most insignificant item relating to economy has become a state secret the limits within which a charge of 'economic espionage' can be laid against anyone might almost be stretched to include mentioning the passage of a cartload of turnips from field to market. The absence of any possibility of organizing a legal opposition; the lack of any means, either within the ruling Party or the country at large, through which dissenting opinion might find expression, necessarily tends to direct discontent with ✓ the regime into conspiratorial channels.

✓ In this respect the new set-up differs from the old pre-war set-up only in that it is more thoroughly totalitarian. The police methods employed are on a par with those of the pre-war anti-democratic regimes, but more highly developed, more 'refined'. However, it is here worth recalling two cases in proof of the fact that the less refined methods of torture have not been abandoned as a weapon of politics.

Wallace Harrison, an electrician, employed by the British Embassy in Budapest, was picked up on July, 1949, by the Hungarian secret police and driven to an unknown destination, where he was subjected to a four-hour grilling in an effort to force him to produce a list of 'traitors'. During the course of this grilling an Hungarian woman friend of his, a Mrs. Torbagyi, was brought in in a fainting condition. Photographs of this friend of his, showing her in an 'extremely distressed and exhausted condition', were also put before him in an effort to influence him. He was released after being given a time limit in which to produce the required 'evidence' and warned that it would be the worse for his friend if he said anything about this outside.

From the statement (dated November 29, 1946) of Peter Koev, Bulgarian deputy detained by the secret police for more than ninety days without any official explanation being given, we quote the following:

For two days after my arrest I was confined to a small dark cell and given no food whatever. On the third day I was taken to the office of the Chief of the Department of State Security. There I met Ganev, the chief of Department 'A', and the militia inspector, Zeev. . . . On the twenty-second day, a Saturday, at eight o'clock in the morning, I was taken up to the fourth floor for the second interrogation. It lasted without a break until eleven o'clock of the following Thursday morning. . . . During all this time I was left standing, without any sleep, without any bread and, what is worse, without any water. I was handcuffed and was not allowed to lean either on the wall or on the table. . . . On the fifth day I collapsed. . . .

This statement was read out in the Bulgarian Parliament by Nicholas Petkov, the Agrarian leader, on December 3, 1946. Petkov was later put on trial, found guilty (although they could not make him plead guilty), and hanged. Koev was also tried and sentenced to a long term of imprisonment.

These incidents—and there are other, similar cases—afford us a brief but illuminating glimpse into the means by which the so-called People's Democracies are governed. And these countries are held up to the admiration of the world by the Communist Parties and their fellow-travellers. Every criticism of Yugoslavia's lack of democracy, its police terror, etc., made by the satellite states, applies with double force to themselves. In Yugoslavia there at least exists the possibility of progress in the direction of an organic development of democratic ideas and ideals, but in the People's Democracies the GPU is not merely a means to an end but an end in itself. Part and parcel of the bureaucratic dictatorship of the Soviet Union, of

which it is the sword and the shield, the GPU well knows that its greatest enemy is a people independent, politically conscious, capable of organizing itself and advancing its own leaders. On a vast scale, with all the resources of a powerful state at its disposal, utilizing the juridical apparatus of the countries concerned, it today carries out the work of political assassination without let or hindrance in the newly acquired colonies of the Soviet Union. The trials in Eastern Europe are one with the Moscow Trials; the same mafia of international assassins who operated on a world scale before the war, continue their work today, though, for the time being, they perpetrate their kidnappings and murders only in Eastern Europe, Austria and Germany.

CONCLUSION

A whole series of political assassinations and of kidnappings in which the victims are never traced is herein recorded for the first time. In each case the victim was an actual or potential opponent of Stalin. These people incurred his hostility because he considered that they represented a challenge to his power. The antecedents of all the victims establish the motive and reveal the red thread uniting all the crimes. In some cases the hall-mark of the GPU is clearly visible; in others the evidence is circumstantial; but a common purpose links them all. No single case would constitute proof of an organized and systematic plan of political assassination carried out by international agents directed from one centre. Even the murder of Leon Trotsky, considered in isolation, might be explained as the more or less independently executed act of an individual materially and morally supported by a section of the Communist Party, but not necessarily involving the GPU. But the cases are too numerous, too widespread, the technical resources and financial expenditure required too great, the common political motivation too strong for them not to have been part of an organized whole. The pieces fit to a pattern; there is here nothing accidental; there is an aim ruthlessly pursued, a plan, a singleness of purpose.

The heyday of these international activities of the GPU was in the years 1937 and 1938. This was a reflection, with a certain time-lag, of the intensified activities, on the home front, which severely dislocated the espionage organization and caused defections among Soviet representatives abroad. Advantage was also taken of the occasion to deal with other enemies. The close connection between the purges in

Russia (where known or suspected enemies of the regime were destroyed in some instances by means of public 'trials', in others without benefit of trial), and the clandestine little purges abroad, was openly admitted by the Soviet authorities in statements on the political situation in Spain during the Civil War there. In Spain an attempt was even made to supplement secret murder with a 'Moscow Trial'. The GPU's judicial murders in Russia differ only in form from those carried out abroad. And the real ruler of Russia, the GPU, today uses the same means, kidnappings, murders and 'confessional' trials, to consolidate its power in Eastern Europe. All these events constitute an organic whole; they are by no means isolated, disconnected, haphazard occurrences, but an integral element of the governmental system. The Soviet Government does not today hesitate to more or less openly call upon its supporters in Yugoslavia to assassinate Tito, and there can be absolutely no doubt at all that the GPU is at this very moment straining every nerve to effect this.

The Soviet Union presents the world with a challenge not only military, political and economic, but also moral. If the material civilization of the West is higher than that of the world behind the Iron Curtain, so should its ethical standards be higher. Yet there are signs indicating that the immorality of Soviet politics has begun to communicate its rottenness to public thinking in the West. The question may therefore be anticipated—What does it matter if in this, that or the other land a White Russian general, an exiled Russian economist, the unknown secretary of an obscure extremist political sect, an anarchist professor, a former GPU agent repentant of his past, a Communist desirous of breaking from the net, a Polish socialist, a Catholic priest, a Protestant pastor—what does it matter if such people are assassinated, abducted, railroaded in a

frame-up trial? These people are not of our faith. A plague on all their houses. Quite well-intentioned persons may possibly take up such an attitude, although they are unlikely to express it so plainly. Others may feel concerned at one injustice, perpetrated on a co-religionist or a co-thinker, but shrug their shoulders at a similar injustice affecting someone for whose ideas they have no sympathy. Once treasured concepts of liberty; the right of the individual to disagree with those in authority; the inviolability of the personality and the person, appear to be losing some of their validity. More and more people are becoming infected with a rabid 'anti-Communism' that makes them blind to fair-play. Thus, for example, one cannot avoid the suspicion that the fate of Noel Field is a matter of some indifference to American public opinion, because this man was a Communist. The same suspicion arises in the case of Dr. Edith Bone, a holder of a British passport, a document once ensuring the protection of its possessor when travelling abroad. In these particular instances we may well be mistaken, but this does not alter the general argument; there is a marked lack of energetic agitation on behalf of the victims of the GPU in Eastern Europe today. In seeking to maintain, deepen and strengthen the idea that the individual citizen has certain inalienable rights, one cannot afford to draw distinctions along party or any other lines. Those who do so merely play into the hands of those who seek to justify and extend secret police methods of government. A principle is either valid at any given time in all circumstances, or it ceases to be a principle. A person accused of any crime is entitled to a fair trial, be he Communist, Catholic, Conservative or Anarchist.

The gravest charge that can be brought against the Soviet Government is that it has corrupted and made an instrument of its power politics what was once part of the world

labour movement. It has made the Communist Parties recruiting grounds for its world espionage network and made their leaders servants of the GPU, willing and ready to defend its vilest actions. These Parties defend the interests of the totalitarian rulers of Russia alone, not the interests of working men and women, either of Russia or any other land, and if it should sometimes appear that these interests coincide, that is purely fortuitous, a matter of expediency. Overnight the Communist Party will turn right-about-face at a word from its master. It has done so more than once; it will do so again if need be. This Party has forfeited any right to be regarded as part of the working class movement.

But that does not mean one ought to apply two standards of justice; that against the Communists the same methods should be used as they use themselves; that one should descend to utilizing their common stock-in-trade of lies, deceit and double-dealing; that one should fall back upon police repression, economic persecution and the like. To do so would be to admit ourselves on a level with countries that have not yet abandoned the cruelties and barbarities of the feudal age, as we have largely done.

Because in our thinking too there linger relics of the past, this problem inevitably gives rise to two main schools of thought: those who approach it from the viewpoint of the bureaucrat and those who do so from the viewpoint of the democrat. The former has no faith in ideas as forces making for social change; does not believe that the truth must inevitably prevail; looks to a social élite to govern, and rejects the wisdom of the people. These are the Western counter-part of the bureaucratic rulers of Russia and its satellites. They reached the height of their power in the West in the regime of Hitler. The latter are all those for whom the voice of the people is truly a call to be heeded;

all those who understand that progress is not imposed from above by decree; that error is not extirpated by fire and sword; that principle and not expediency must govern all political action, and that, in the battle to remould the world nearer to the heart's desire, the truth alone provides a weapon that will not break in the hand that wields it.

This exposure of the role of the GPU in International affairs aims to shatter the lie that the Soviet Union stands at the head of the march of human progress. The facts set forth will help towards an understanding of the truth that lies behind the curtain of illusion.

BRIEF HISTORICAL NOTE ON THE GPU

ADDENDUM

Throughout this work the initials GPU have been used to designate an organization that is, strictly speaking, not now so called. This is because in spite of altered initials essentials remain unchanged, and it is considered preferable to use GPU instead of initials less widely known and not having the same associations in the mind of the reader. In fact, it may be confidently asserted that the change in name was at least partly due to the evil associations aroused by the initials GPU.

The reader may, however, be interested in the following outline of the development of the Soviet police apparatus, based on an official Soviet work on the subject published in 1947.

At the time of the October Revolution the combating of counter-revolutionary tendencies and acts, and the maintenance of public order was in the hands of the Military Revolutionary Committee attached to the Petrograd Soviet. On December 4, 1917, a Special Commission for the Fight Against Counter-Revolution was set up, and on December 20 this was re-named the All-Russian Extraordinary Commission to Fight Counter-Revolution and Sabotage (*Vserossiskaya Chrezvychainaya Komissia Po Borbe s Konterrevoliutsiei i Sabotazhem*). This organization was headed by Felix Dzerzhinsky and attached to the Council of People's Commissars and nominally subordinate to it.

It became known as the Cheka, from the initials of the

Russian words for Extraordinary Commission. The long-drawn-out civil war, the flames of which were fanned by foreign intervention, helped to strengthen the power of the Cheka and encourage the tendency for it to act in its own right and throw off any control by the formally superior governmental body. As time went by the Cheka grew more and more away from any sort of popular control and became in due course an independent body.

With the end of the civil war and intervention the Cheka was re-organized into the so-called State Political Administration (Gosudarstvennoe Politicheskoe Upravlenie, *i.e.* the GPU), as a branch of the People's Commissariat for Home Affairs (NKVD). The GPU was entrusted, among other tasks, with the suppression of counter-revolutionary activity, protection of the country against spies, 'political' protection of the frontiers, and the carrying out of any special instructions of the highest Government organs (Central Committee and Council of People's Commissars).

When the RSFSR was finally consolidated into the USSR in 1922, the GPU was detached from the NKVD and one all-embracing 'Intelligence body' was created, the Unified State Political Administration (Ob'edinyonnoe Gosudarstvennoe Politicheskoe Upravlenie—sometimes referred to as the OGPU, but more commonly retaining the initials GPU). The Chairman of the OGPU and his deputy were appointed by the Presidium of the Central Executive Committee of the USSR. The Chairman was also an *ex-officio* member of the Council of People's Commissars, but without a vote on that body. Members of the Collegium of the OGPU had to be approved by the Sovnarkom (Council of People's Commissars) and enjoyed the same status as members of the Collegiums of the Commissariats. The OGPU had its representatives at the Soviet Supreme

Court. The work of the local organs of the OGPU was directed by plenipotentiaries appointed by the centre and attached to the Sovnarkoms of the Union Republics.

In 1934 an NKVD was set up and the OGPU merged in it, hence the subsequent reference to the political police as the NKVD instead of the GPU. According to the official Soviet explanation this fresh re-organization was made in conformity with the new methods of fighting the class enemy required by the fact that socialist construction had been victorious. Various administrative departments of the NKVD were formed to handle specific tasks: State Security, Workers' and Peasants' Militia, Frontier and Internal Guards, Fire Brigades, Corrective Labour Camps and Settlements, Civic Registration, Administrative Department. Under the Chairman of the NKVD Collegium a Special Committee was formed with the power to take action against people regarded as 'publicly dangerous'. Meetings of this Committee were attended, *inter alia*, by the Procurator of the USSR or his Deputy.

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In February, 1941, it was considered desirable to detach certain intelligence and secret police functions from the NKVD, and a People's Commissariat for State Security was therefore formed; but on the outbreak of the Soviet-German war the two Commissariats were fused. When the tide of war flowed in favour of the USSR the State Security organ again became independent.

In 1946 all People's Commissariats were re-named Ministries; consequently the NKVD is now known as the MVD and the Ministry of State Security is known by the initials MGB. It is the MGB which undertakes the functions of intelligence and counter-intelligence and for this purpose has its secret agents abroad as well as in the USSR. It is, of course, not excluded that a specialized body, operating in even greater secret, may have been set up within

the MGB, or even independent of it. The term GPU used in this book, while it primarily corresponds to the present term MGB, must also be taken to embrace some of the functions of the MVD.

The secret police organization of Soviet Russia is, of course, in direct line of succession with the Tsarist Okhrana. One cannot refrain from quoting the words of Maurice Paleologue, one-time French Ambassador in Russia:

This formidable *officine* dates from Peter the Great, who formed it in 1697. . . . Its historic origins must, however, be looked for much earlier; one finds them in the byzantine traditions and in the operations of the Tartar domination . . . espionage, delation, torture, secret executions were the normal and regulating instruments of the Russian police. (*La Russie des Tsars*, Paris, 1921, p. 252.)

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